



PLAYSTATION 3

PlayStation

Official Magazine - UK

Issue 035 September 2009 £5.99
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BATMAN

ARKHAM ASYLUM

**The Dark Knight returns!
World exclusive review**

Find out why it's this year's
must-play action game

Driving game blowout

We test the new wave of racers

HOW TO STAY ALIVE IN HEAVY RAIN

Team Ico special

10 pages of arthouse action



Soldier's verdict on Op Flashpoint
PES or FIFA? We've played both
All you need is The Beatles: Rock Band
How we solved the Xi mystery



EA VS UFC: FIGHT! TEKKEN 6  ASHES CRICKET 09 EYEPET

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Welcome



An admission: as superhero games go, I thought the first Spider-Man on PS2

was great. To me, the city felt huge, the swinging nailed the illusion you were really playing as Spidey, and the combat was meaty and fulfilling. But no other bugger agreed, and I almost fell out with two colleagues who refused to accept my POV. Turns out I'm maybe a bit stubborn.

Thankfully, I've not had to resort to the same tactic in support of PS3's first strong superhero effort. We're united in the view that Rocksteady's new Batman game does a cracking job of breathing life into the claustrophobic comic book setting of Arkham Asylum. The fighting is snappy, the mix of stealth and all-out action is beautifully balanced, and the relationship between Bats and the Joker drives the story along. There's no debate to be had here: it's a special game.

Other things we all agree on: PS3 driving games are about to go huge, Nathan Drake's new Uncharted co-star is super hot, and there's never been anything quite like Heavy Rain. See? I'm not *that* stubborn. Unless you're even thinking about challenging the Ashes Cricket 2009 score...

Ben Wilson
Deputy editor

ben.wilson@futurenet.com

COVER REVIEW



94 BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

Why the Dark Knight's latest adventure is making superheroes cool again.

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Expert opinion on every PS3, PSP + PS2 game The latest PlayStation news direct from Sony Unrivalled behind-the-scenes access In-depth coverage of the games you want to play Features you won't find anywhere else More pages, more games, more PlayStation than any other magazine.

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1 September



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Who we are...



Tim Clark
Editor-in-chief

Has a new look for summer. Key pieces include a pink feather boa, and spandex trousers.

Game of the month
Call Of Duty: World At War
Best Batman character
Batman



Ben Wilson
Deputy editor

Ever the perfectionist, Benji checked the Claudia Black story on page 14 for hours. With a magnifying glass.

Game of the month
Ashes Cricket 2009
Best Batman character
Killer Croc



Leon Hurley
Commissioning editor

Found one of those rare 20p pieces, now planning to retire on the spoils.

Game of the month
Battlefield 1943
Best Batman character
Killer Moth



Rachel Penny
News editor

After a long campaign Rach was finally awarded the in-demand corner desk. Claims to still be working.

Game of the month
Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits
Best Batman character
Catwoman



Nathan Ditum
Reviews editor

Ever competitive Nath began carb-loading his son six weeks before junior school sports day.

Game of the month
Batman: Arkham Asylum
Best Batman character
Man-Bat



Helen Woodey
Operations editor

Declared green beans and fish the greatest lunch of all time. "As long as it's got the right sauce, it's not gross."

Game of the month
Rock Band 2
Best Batman character
The Riddler



David Boddington
Content producer

Put his digital skills to good use and broadcast the Murray/Roddick match to the entire office.

Game of the month
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10
Best Batman character
The Joker



James Jarvis
Assistant producer

Our JJ excels in three areas: high-quality video, ladies, and table football.

Game of the month
Burnout Paradise
Best Batman character
Poison Ivy

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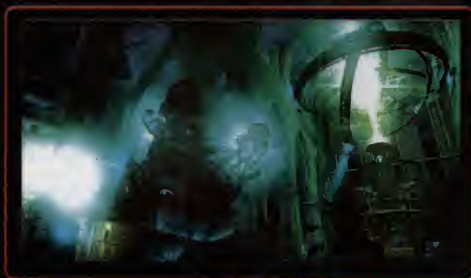
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PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows



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XBOX LIVE



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Official Magazine - UK

On your disc



Up periscope, I spy me a beauty! This month Captain Ratchet's been using the OPM submarine to explore the depths of the demo deep, and we've spotted something huge on the radar. It's not a whale, it's not a giant squid, it's a

brand new inFamous demo! Which is enough to put the spark back into anyone's life. Any shipmate will tell you that even a life of rum and yo ho ho on the open seas can't compare to frying pedestrians on the streets of Empire City. And if that isn't enough to fire your torpedoes, there are another 12 demos for you to try. You enjoy them, while I find next month's selection. Dive dive dive!

Rachel Penny News editor



This month's exclusive highlights...



Fight Night Round 4

Hook, block and butt (booo!) your way through three rounds with Filipino Manny 'Pac-Man' Pacquiao and Ricky Hatton in EA's boxing classic.



UFC 2009: Undisputed

Prefer winning by shattering a foe's ankle? Then step into the octagon as Chuck Liddell or Mauricio Rua.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10

Big fun with tiny balls. Master that perfect swing then make like a Pro and putt your way through the US Open.



Red Faction: Guerrilla

Multiplayer on Mars with totally destructible environments, super power-ups and a load of explosives.



What if my disc doesn't work?

If it definitely doesn't work, send the disc to Disc Returns, OPM, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW and we'll replace it. You can also email questions to opm@futurenet.com.

Switch your PS3 on, find the Game icon on the XMB bar and then select 'OPSM - UK Blu-ray Demo 2009/35'.

inFamous

Go on a real power trip as Cole McGrath, Mr Average turned zap-happy superhero. Learn to navigate Empire City, fry your enemies with serious voltage and then use your powers to save a train full of hostages.

Also on the disc this month: Playable Sonic Unleashed, Skate 2, Motorstorm: Pacific Rift, HAWX, Marvel Vs Capcom 2, Mercenaries 2: World In Flames, NHL 09, NBA Live 09, WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2009, Up: The Video Game Video Final Fantasy XIV, Battlefield 1943, Battlefield Bad Company, Modern Warfare 2, Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow.

WHAT WILL YOU FIGHT FOR?



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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about...

Sit rep

Iraq veteran tests Op Flashpoint.

► **Page 12**



Anger management

The latest on shooter/racer hybrid Rage.

► **Page 14**

New Raider revealed?

Lara's new look leaked.

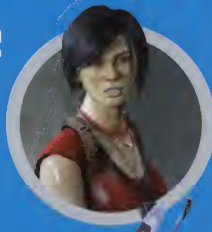
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Uncharted 2 chick chat

We talk to the new girl.

► **Page 18**



Home numbers

Stats and facts from Sony's virtual world.

► **Page 20**



Monster mash!

1 The magic of motion control



The latest info and wizardry from the men behind Sony's new controller



The whole world in your hands

Using two motion controllers allows the player to manipulate both the sword and shield. The technology means every block with the shield and twist of the blade is perfectly replicated. Take that bones!

Swordplay!

With motion control set to be the next major battleground for the three console manufacturers, we've been itching to get another look at Sony's implementation of the tech, which had such an impressive debut in June. Our next chance to see it in action came at the Develop Conference in Brighton. Although it was essentially the same presentation that we saw at the E3 expo in LA, this time we got the chance to chat to members of Sony's research and development team.

The controller, rumoured to be called GEM, uses the PS3 Eye camera for such accurate tracking that it can be used as a tennis racket, a sword, or a paint brush. The tech is already with external developers, but prototypes are limited, so the teams with the most exciting ideas are first in line. Dr Richard Marks, Sony's R&D manager for special projects (and wannabe wizard) has his own suggestions for what devs should be

working on. "The idea is to use augmented reality (mixed graphics and video) and real-time special FX technology to enable your own personal magic show," he says. "The new controller makes for a great magic wand, and the PS Eye can detect and track faces in live video, and the PS Eye mic array can be used for speech recognition. With a new magic trick downloadable every month, I think there is no limit to the fun that would be possible." Meanwhile Paul Holman, vice president of research and development, told us, "I think that's the fun thing about the industry, you never know what mad or brilliant idea will turn into a fantastic title."

Face time

Kish Hirani, head of developer services for Sony, told us about all the different technologies available to new developers. As well as motion

control, the PS Eye has AI Live, which allows it to recognise the gestures, facial expressions and even gender of players. "The whole augmented reality of being able to see yourself excites us... and you're holding something else, that's like wow!" He also revealed that the PS3 Eye can track four motion controllers at once – think multiplayer – and uses a combination of the glowing ball on the end of the controller and internal accelerometers to ensure it never loses track of what you're doing.

Holman told us the tech is "really on track" for its planned spring 2010 release, but it won't be the death of the joypad. "The new controller will not replace the DualShock 3," insists Marks. "It will sit beside it like a glowing new brother. Like fork and spoon, or hammer and screwdriver, or... well, you get the picture."

What games do you want to see integrating the motion control technology? Email us at opm@futurenet.com.

The competition

Despite strong competition from Microsoft's Project Natal and Nintendo's Wii Motion Plus, Sony seems confident its tech will be the most accurate when it comes to tracking player movement. "I think we can just say that it's very, very precise," says Paul Holman, vice president, research and development. Kish Hirani, head of developer services added, "The most precise thing you can do is write your name using a [piece of] chalk on a blackboard. Try doing that with a mouse and it's bloody difficult."



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

2

A real-life soldier's guide to Op Flashpoint

Just how authentic is new shooter Dragon Rising?

Words of war

Patrick Hennessey's autobiographical account of his time in the army, *The Junior Officers' Reading Club: Killing Time And Fighting Wars*, follows his career from training at Sandhurst through to service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The book takes its title from the group he formed to stave off boredom during huge stretches of inactivity between periods of combat.



Patrick Hennessey, a former captain in the Grenadier Guards, has seen action in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now in civies and a critically acclaimed author, he's helping us live through Dragon Rising's brand of hardcode military realism. His big tip? Split our squad into two groups that alternate moving and firing. "In theory, no one's moving without someone ready to suppress the enemy," he explains.

"If you're firing at the enemy, then he's got his head down and not firing back." It works perfectly.

We move half our team forward and as the enemy appear we spray them with bullets, prompting another recommendation: "Never use burst fire. Because of the nature of a rifle, if you're on burst fire only the first

round is on target. Every round after that is wasted." Point taken.

Plan ahead

Any good overall advice then? "Instead of thinking in terms of ground, objectives and numbers, think about the effects you want to have," says Hennessey. "It's called effects-based planning. Effects like 'defeat, destroy, hold'. Do you want to hold the ground or destroy the enemy?" He highlights the mission we're playing, "The effect you want is to destroy the radar. But you don't necessarily want to kill every enemy, so maybe go a route where they can't see you, rather than take them on."

Overall, then, what does Hennessey think of the game?



Soldier talk

"I was in a compound that had a blue-on-blue Hellfire missile dropped on it. We were fine. Bloody annoyed and deaf, but fine."

Patrick Hennessey
Former captain,
Grenadier Guards

"What I'm impressed by is that there's much more time in a firefight than people think. Things happen relatively slowly. You'd think everything's going on at once; realistically it's slow. You might be sat in a trench waiting for air [support]; there's the odd shot, then an intense burst of activity and it'll stop again. That sort of element is quite faithfully recreated here."

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising will be released in autumn. Magic 8-ball says 'September'.



Work in pairs

"No movement without fire," is Hennessey's hot tip. "Always have covering fire - what we call 'one foot on the ground'. You've always got one section as fire support, and one assaulting. One firing, one moving, and then you swap over." Simple.



Stay low

According to Hennessey, "If you join the British army you spend the first six weeks of training being shouted at by a Sergeant who makes you crawl everywhere. You get on your belt buckle. Maybe in certain situations you'd get on a knee. But standing up? You just don't do it."



Use the environment

"Look at the terrain and identify checkpoints," explains Hennessey. "Treelines and bush are what we call 'cover from view', so they conceal movement. While concrete or a ditch, ideally a ditch, provides 'cover from fire' - where if a round hits, it's not necessarily going to strike you."



PS

013



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

3

Rage gets real

Top-secret info on Doom dev's new racing-shooter

Imagine if Fallout 3 and Motorstorm hit it off and made babies. The strongest, prettiest one would be Doom creator id's new game, Rage. Set after an asteroid strike, you play the inhabitant of an Arc – a special bunker built to survive the strike's impact. But when an earthquake damages the shelter you surface years later than intended, emerging into a barren world where pockets of humanity fight to survive in corroded, industrialised settlements.

Guns and gaskets

The vehicles play a key role. You drive across sterile terrain, battling raiders and competing in gladiatorial races, initially on quad bikes and later upgrading to cars and trucks. Extras like armour and chain guns can also be added to make your ride more suitable for battle. That said, Rage is a shooter at heart. As you explore, you fight mutants and befriend allies. Resources are limited, so your gear is mostly improvised. Find a plan and the parts and you can build anything from robot sentries and remote-control car bombs, to devices that grind out locks to open doors. And, as well as the usual machine guns and shotgies, you'll find cool weapons like the wingstick – part boomerang, part throwing knife, you can spin it out to slice up multiple enemies and have it fly straight back to you.

id isn't talking plot yet, but insists you won't have to follow a set path. We'll have more details next month, so be excited. This should be special.

Make sure you get your hands on our full preview of Rage in Issue 36 of OPM, on sale 1 September.



■ Rage – because a man should never have to choose between his chain gun and his post-apocalyptic dune-buggy.



■ EA has a tough task on its hands to get any well-known fighters into its new MMA game.

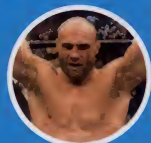
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4

Who's going to be in EA MMA?

Has the UFC knocked out its only rival before the bell?

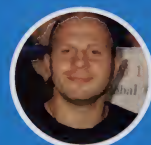
The three fighters most likely to sign



Randy Couture
Five-time UFC champ who mysteriously didn't feature in *Undisputed 2009*.



Gina Carano
There's no lady-division in the UFC, and she's already been in EA's *Red Alert 3*.



Fedor Emelianenko
The best heavyweight in the world is rumoured to have been doing mo-cap with EA.

While EA is working on its own mixed martial arts game, it seems the sport's best fighters have already been banned from appearing in it. The word first went out on the Underground, an MMA forum frequented by fighters, managers – and, occasionally, by UFC president Dana White. "I hear that all MMA managers were informed that if any of their clients not currently under contract with the UFC sign to be a part of the EA game, they will forever be banned for fighting in the UFC," said long-term poster Golden Boy.

It was a grand claim, but since then, White has apparently backed it up by telling MMAJunkie.com that he's now "at war" with EA and confirming that any fighter who signs with the EA title "won't be in the UFC." He even claims that "EA wouldn't even meet [with UFC] because mixed martial arts disgusted them". Clearly, this is not a man who is about to back down.

This isn't the first time UFC bosses have employed strong-arm tactics to ensure their game's dominance. In 2008 they axed wrestler Jon Fitch – as well as teammates Cain Velasquez and Josh Koscheck – after he refused to sign away his image rights for UFC 2009 *Undisputed*. "The problem is it's a lifetime exclusive contract," says Fitch. "That means we would never ever be able to work with any videogame companies other than the one the UFC provides." Fitch was reinstated shortly after – although the terms of the deal are unknown.

Martial law

So what does this mean for EA's fledgling MMA game? Well, with most of the UFC roster locked down, this rumour could cripple EA's chances of landing upcoming fighters. Ambitious youngsters may fear upsetting White – the most powerful man in the sport – and in doing so jeopardise their

futures and market value. More likely to sign with EA are fighters like Tim Sylvia, who's lost four times in UFC and is unlikely to return there. But names like his may not be enough to entice fans who only recognise UFC regulars – and that could throw the entire project into doubt.

Still, EA Sports president Peter Moore is doing his best to appear unflustered. "I love mixed martial arts, and we've been working on a game concept since I came here two years ago," he says. "Our title will bring both innovation and further authenticity to mixed martial arts, not to mention a strong global publishing network that will help spread the sport's popularity around the world." But will it bring with it any fighters we've actually heard of? That's a question you're unlikely to see answered conclusively any time soon.

Keep up to date with the world of mixed martial arts on the Underground forum, at enipurl.com/mfuboo.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



5

Lara to do a horror game?

Leak suggests Tomb Raider will be an open-world, survival horror title

■ Will Alison Carroll continue to be the face (and body) of Tomb Raider?

It started as a rumour: some blurry pics and a fact sheet that seemed to herald a new Tomb Raider. Not a sequel to the recent Underworld, but a complete reboot, ditching everything save the name for an open-world adventure on a monster-filled Japanese island. Think Siren meets Uncharted. Yet no one took the rumour seriously, until Crystal Dynamics' lawyers had the leaked info pulled from websites – a move that only seemed to confirm this new version of Raider was real after all.

Fantasy island

It sees a young Lara shipwrecked on a creepy island and hunted by monsters – this time, without her trademark twin handguns. Instead, the focus is on dramatic melee combat using weapons like machetes and bows. There's also a 'Creative Survival' system where Lara must find tools – climbing axes or ropes, for example – to reach new areas. Interestingly, it's a completely open world, with Lara able to travel and climb anywhere to uncover a murky supernatural past. According to the leaked fact sheet there's "no one right

way to traverse, survive, and explore the harsh environment".

The news split fans. "If it's that scary, it's going to be awesome," said tombraderforums.com user Drone, while aileenwuornos commented that, "This sounds ****ing bad-ass." But NightWish cynically asks, "Do you think Square Enix demanded Japan as the next location? It's a weird coincidence," drawing attention to the fact that publisher Eidos has just been taken over by the Japanese company. Planetlara.com's poll results were split 50/50 between loving and hating the new direction, with Paramore_lover saying, "It wouldn't be a Lara game without the guns. The blade and bow is not Lara." Meanwhile, on tombraderboard.com opinions were downright hostile, with Julien posting, "Tell me it's fake! What a HORRIFIC concept." Ouch.

Of course, it may never see daylight. Developers prototype many secret concepts that never get made. But with Raider creator Toby Gard at Crystal Dynamics as a lead designer, there's clearly a new Lara game on the way. Let's hope it's this one.

Like the sound of Lara's new direction? Get on Twitter and tell us now. We're at twitter.com/OPM_UK.

PS
017



■ Lara's lost on a strange island, and is being hunted by freaks.



■ Survival means using whatever tools come to hand.



■ Strange and horrifying monsters roam the wilderness.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Black's character Chloe Frazer gets acquainted with Drake in Uncharted 2.

6

"Nathan Drake is bloody hot"

Uncharted 2 actress reveals crush on co-star

Aussie-rules acting

Like all Australian actors, Claudia did a stint in Home And Away as an up-and-coming starlet. "It's an inexorable stepping stone," she laughs. "Casting directors in Australia want to put you through your paces before they will give you bigger roles. That role was offered to me as a sort of test. People need to know you'll turn up on time, learn your lines etc. [Her character] Sandy was a relatively tasteful seductress." Sounds like good practise for Chloe...

Acting is all about chemistry. It's about establishing a relationship with your co-star – even if they're made out of texture maps. Claudia Black has become something of an expert. The Australian-born actress and veteran of sci-fi/fantasy series such as Farscape, Stargate SG1 and, poor thing, Xena: Warrior Princess, has notched up several game voiceover roles, but seems to have especially enjoyed Chloe Frazer, Nathan Drake's tempestuous new partner – and love interest – in Uncharted 2. She particularly enjoyed Nathan. "Drake is bloody hot," she admits when asked about the man of her dreams, "almost the ideal male, looks-wise!" But he's pipped by one man: "My husband is the ideal bloke for me." Damn. That's the answer we *didn't* want to hear.

Despite parts in Crysis and God Of War, Black says she doesn't have much time to play games, relying on her husband as a sort of game advisor: "He usually tells me the background to the game before each audition. He is an essential part of the research aspect of my preparation."

Name game

Black's done more than read the script. She did a lot of the motion capture work, and even helped name the character, "Amy Hennig, the creative director, gave us some options. And based on the chemistry Chloe and Nate needed to have, I suggested that names that start with a hard consonant make it easier for them to react angrily to each other." That's acting science, right there!



Soaking!

She's super complimentary about the role, calling it an "awesome gig" and referring to Naughty Dog as "crazy, lovely insomniacs". But what of actor Nolan North, the voice of Nathan? "I adore him. We agreed that we are very similar. My only addendum to that is that he is slightly more annoying." Her answer to our request for a secret about Among Thieves is a little less clear: "We all sound like relatives of Borat, innit." A comment on the acting, or just Claudia being playfully mysterious? The latter suits us just fine.

We'll have the world exclusive review next month. Until then, check us playstation.com/uncharted for more.



PS3

■ Black on Naughty Dog: "It's been such an honour to work with them and try to serve their vision."



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

7m

visits since launch

1,655,813

Watchmen costumes downloaded



3,000,000

of Home's users live in Europe

56

minutes: the average European session



6,000,000

items downloaded in Europe

125,000

plays of the Transformers 2 treasure hunt



Home truths

We uncover the facts about Sony's virtual world

Home games

Sony is looking to increase its selection of in-Home mini-games over the next few months. There's the imminent arrival of the Buzz! Space, which will allow up to 64 players to engage in trivia quizzes resembling 70s kids TV show, Runaround. Director, Peter Edward, also mentioned a special bowling apartment, allowing players to run their own private bowling tournaments.

Meet the man who gave you hundreds of people in vests simultaneously doing the running man dance. Peter Edward is director of Sony's Home Platform Group, and he's pleased with how Home has fared since its launch back in December 2008.

Thanks to Edward, we've now had everything from Resistance 2 spaces to Watchmen clothes, celebrity

interviews, treasure hunts and alternative reality game Xi.

But he's got a heck of a lot more planned. Key to the future of Home is the Game Launching feature, a place for gamers to meet before heading into an online multiplayer game mode. Warhawk, Street Fighter IV and Resistance 2 already support the service, but more – including LittleBigPlanet and Motorstorm: Pacific Rift – are set to come online very soon. As Edward explains, "My vision is, when users switch on their PS3s they go straight into Home; they look at all the updates, check out any messages in their personal space and then Game Launch to a couple of titles

from within Home." We also ask Edward whether we're going to be seeing customisable personal spaces and clothes. "Absolutely, that's part of the vision, long-term," he replies. And the reports that Home may soon allow you to share your audio and video content? "Oh yeah, it's an ongoing process," says Edward, though he mentions that copyright and pirating issues are a nightmare. Edward also all-but-confirms another ARG like Xi, and also tells us that virtual pets are on his lab's long 'to-do' list. Better hair and a pet tiger? What more can you ask?



Dev talk

"Our focus is building the community and making sure it's one that will still be here in X years' time - one that will still be growing and active."
Peter Edward, director, Home Platform Group

Missed out on Xi? Read our detailed guide to the intricate alternate reality game on page 54.



837,136



visits to the **Red Bull Air Race** in just five months.

450,000

downloads of **Star Trek** uniform during a two-week campaign.



80%

of users are **18-35-year-old males**



£20,000

spent on developing the **Diesel** clothing store

8 OPM podcast

Download the sweet sound of games



Laughs, tears and hot gaming news from team OPM.

Ever wondered just how silky Leon Hurley's voice actually is? What it's like to sit with team OPM in the pub? How good it'd be to get all the latest gaming gossip and opinion on your iPod? Then you'll be pleased to hear the first Official PlayStation Magazine podcast is available right now.

That's right. Not content with bringing you great gaming coverage in printed format, we've started a monthly podcast too. In our very first episode we tell you what you can look forward to in the next issue of OPM, answer your questions, and debate the big topics of the month. Items on the agenda include Batman: Arkham Asylum, FIFA versus PES, the strange delights of EyePet, and we even offer up helpful information like how to bag yourself a career in games.

Download festival

The podcast is available right now on iTunes and over at snipurl.com/n6zxw – and costs a bit fat nothing! As soon as the OPM website is up and running you'll be able to download it from there too. No, really, any day now. We mean it this time.

We want you to be a big part of the podcast too, so once you've had a listen, give us your feedback and tell us what you'd like to hear us discuss. We'll be using our expert brains to solve your technical, gaming, and maybe even romantic problems – so email your queries in now. And if we get enough requests we may even do a little impromptu SingStar. "Every now and then I fall apart..."

Got a question you want us to answer in the podcast?
Send it to opm@futurenet.com

Yeshi, it's still sitting on your ass playing games, but at least you're out of the house



PS2
022

9

The day we got monstered in London

OPM plays Monster Hunter in the real-life Gathering Hall

The game

Freedom Unite is the latest release in grind-heavy role-play series Monster Hunter, which is huge in Japan. There's no online, but up to four players can quest together using PSP's WiFi. Assuming you can find someone to play with...



The big drawback to getting hopelessly addicted to Capcom's role-playing phenomenon, Monster Hunter Freedom Unite, is that, with no online play, you have a choice of either grinding hermitaurs for hours all by yourself, or trying to get your mates hooked on the game, like a geeky low-level drugs pusher.

Step in publisher Capcom, who has transformed The Gallery Soho on Charing Cross Road into a three-floored Gathering Hall, mimicking the hall found in the game itself where

hunters connect wirelessly and select missions. Instead of a quest board and roaring fireplace, though, the real version is filled with a free soft drinks bar, gaming cushions so comfy they feel like God's own cradling hands, and tons of hardcore players.

Monster munch

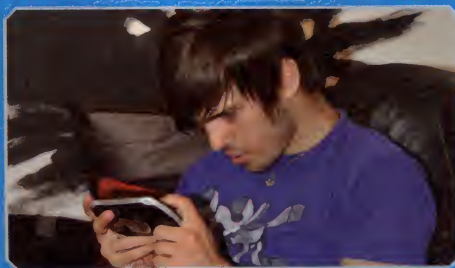
Like? Like Kenneth Gabriel, Steven Cooney and Louis Antoniou, three friends from Edgware we met at the hall. They're serious players – Stephen has clocked up 50 hours just a week after release – and

since it's opened they've been visiting whenever they can. "We've already met a couple of people, and just started playing," Louis says. So is it easier than meeting players out and about? "I don't carry my PSP when I'm out and about." Good point – and it shows why the hall is invaluable to otherwise lonely MHers. So it not only looks cool, but is a free way to avoid going nuts repeating the same quest in your room. And those chairs? Amazing. Really.

The Gathering Hall is at 121 Charing Cross Road in London, and it's open until the end of August.



Girls love a guy who plays PSP on the street, right?



Check out the pro 'claw' control method.



The Edgware boys, in matching Monster Hunter T-shirts. Aww.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



10 Are you sick to death of shooters?

OPM's pistoleers stand back-to-back at dawn



Yes

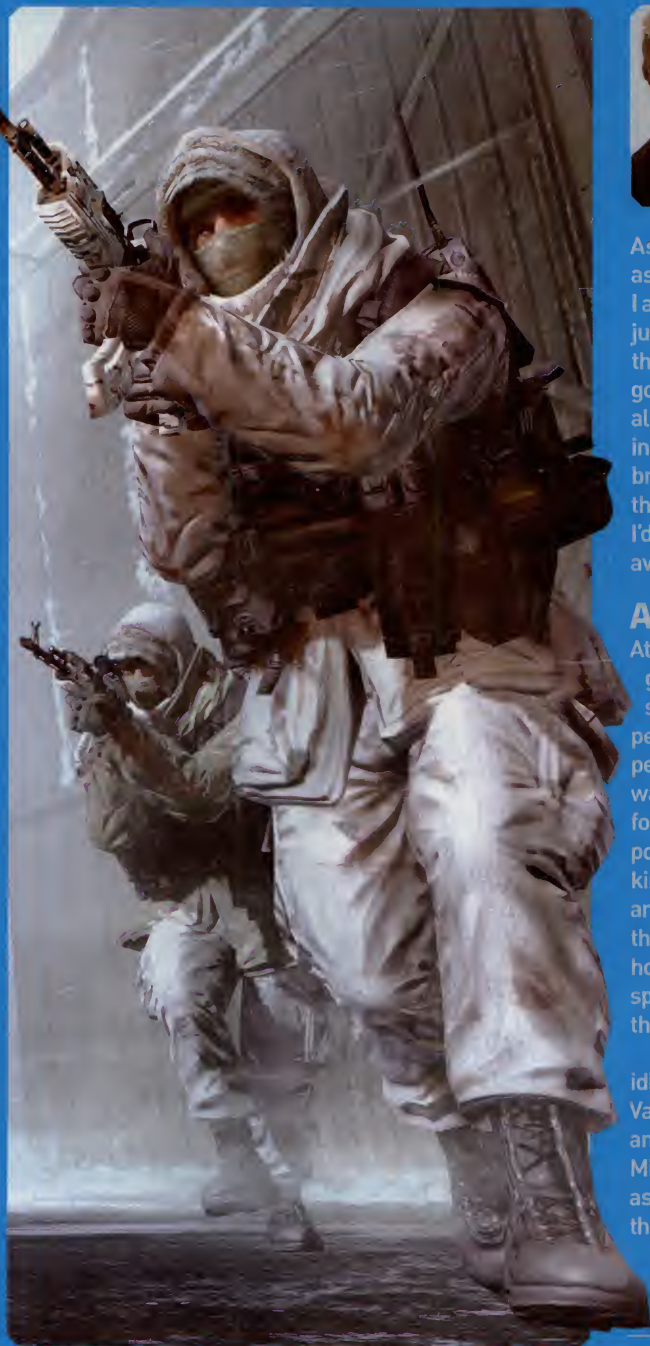
Says virtual war criminal and innovation beatnik, **Paul Fitzpatrick**

Over the years, on various consoles, with guns too numerous to mention, I've killed more people than cholera, and this leads me to two conclusions: One, if we ever give equal rights to AI characters I'm going to hell faster than you can say '10011111010101001'. Two, it's high time we demanded more from our down time than an endless supply of virtual hot lead and conveyor belts of meatbags. Shooters have long since become the lowest common denominator of games.

Stop reloading

This means that any publisher out to balance the books can (and will) commission yet another technically proficient but eye-wateringly pedestrian FPS that clogs up the shelves and actively injures gamer goodwill. That's annoying, but nothing compared to the fact that we rarely give bottom-feeder devs a reason to come up with something truly different. Did I love COD4? Hell yes. But would I trade Modern Warfare 2 in a heartbeat for a world in which games makers couldn't just fall back on the holy trinity of shotgun, sniper and carbine whenever inspiration ran dry? Absolutely. While I recognise that I'd have to prise the M16s from the majority of your cold dead hands before you'd give up shooters, I truly believe you'd change your tune if games like The Last Guardian were the innovative rule, not the exception.

Do you think shooters are holding original games hostage? Text SHOOT YES to 87474.



■ Imagine Modern Warfare 2's soldiers carrying flowers instead of guns...



No

Says point man, burger fan, and first guy through the door, **Nathan Ditum**

Asking if I'm sick of shooters is like asking if I'm done with being hungry. I always need to eat *something*, it's just a matter of my brain registering the occasional difference between good and bad tastes. I like steak, but if all that's going is dirty burger, I'm still in. Similarly, while there are too many brown, xenophobic shooters out there, the cold hard truth is that I'd rather play a bad shooter than an average anything else.

All in the brain

At this point you may assume I'm a gun freak. But the reason I love shooters *isn't* that I like shooting people, but because the first-person perspective is the most immersive way to play games. The tech term for the brain's ability to sense the position and movement of the body is kinesthetics, and by definition FPSs are able to replicate this sense better than anything else. This is what I'm hooked on – controlling a body in a 3D space and feeling like I'm actually there. *Then* shooting people.

Seriously, though, I don't just enjoy idiotic, violent shooters. I also loved Valve's unique shooter-puzzle Portal, and championed the opinion-dividing Mirror's Edge until colleagues assumed I'd gone mad. Games like these show the shooter is capable of loads more. It's basically like having burger *and* steak – and how could you ever get sick of that?

Know for a fact that you'll never get tired of guns in games? Text SHOOT NO to 87474.

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Your gamer's guide to the month ahead.

Losing faith in second-hand games

Is the pre-owned market going to kill gaming?

How often do you pay full price for a game? The rise of internet retail has seen the cost of games plummet, and with high street chains now offering trade-ins and used discs as standard, the recommended retail price is becoming as relevant to gamers as parachutes to trout.

But while online retailers can discount through the lower cost of running virtual premises, the way in which the high street is saving you money has become a major bone of contention within the games industry. At first glance it seems a mean-spirited argument. Publishers and developers complaining that trade-ins are ripping them off? The likes of EA begrudging you a £10 saving? The cheek of it. But they may have a point.

If a significant amount of the money being spent on games now stops at the retailer via a second-hand sale, devs and publishers are essentially giving many copies of these mega productions away for free, while the stores recycle old stock for repeated revenue. Factor in the

size and prominence of your local games store's pre-owned section and you're looking at a potentially very large drop in 'real' sales.

Shop talk

Retail defends the practice. GAME says they've offered preowned for over a decade and it's always been popular with core gamers as it allows them to play more games. It's a strong argument, particularly from a buyer's perspective, but when development costs mean even established developers like Free Radical can fold after a disappointing release, it's understandable that some industry voices disagree. One of those voices is that of David Perry, developer of Earthworm Jim and MDK.

"The net effect is that the developer now gets nothing from the sale, nor does the publisher, or any of the support



Value added

How developers keep you playing their games



Multiplayer

Nothing extends a game's life like a strong online multiplayer mode. After all, who *isn't* still racking up kills with Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare online?



Downloadable content

If multiplayer just won't fit, there are always expansions. If you know a game like Fallout 3 is getting DLC, you may as well hold on to your copy to check it out.



Special editions

Publishers like Red Faction: Guerrilla's THQ are bundling their discs with swag like action figures and limited edition collectibles as an incentive to buy new.

services in the industry", he says. "It's smart for the retailer, but horribly short-sighted, as at the same time they want the developers to go and make them better games."

There's no point in a bigger market if the creators don't get a boost from it. While Perry is at pains to emphasise that he doesn't begrudge gamers selling their stuff first-hand – he himself uses ebay to track down rarities – his concern is that retail should support the creatives who fuel it.

"Retailers are the marketing partners of the publishers, and are supposed to

sell the game they have partnered to market. All those TV adverts, all the standees, the posters, the messages on the receipts, the mats on the floors, the stickers on the windows, the radio adverts, the advertising-based shopping catalogues that are mailed out... *everything* is paid for by the publishers."

So the trade-in market really is a threat to the industry? "No, it simply represents a threat to the health of the retailers. Retailers are making hay while the sun shines, but in doing so are actually pushing publishers and developers towards digital distribution faster than ever."

That last point is irrefutable. The rise of legitimate downloads is massively attractive to publisher and gamer alike, offering a more direct connection between – and lower costs for – both groups. Following the rise of PSN there's a very real argument that high street retail should be giving publishers more incentive to stick with it.

So how long before the day of reckoning Perry predicts? Right now, internet speeds and traditional shopping culture mean that physical media and those who trade in it are safe. With the next console generation though, we're very likely to see whether he's right when he says that brick-and-mortar chains are "hitting the gas pedal into oblivion".

▲ Mirror's Edge wasn't the massive success EA and DICE had hoped for, but a canny release of speed trial DLC meant those who did buy it hung on to their copies.

RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers

Successful series in sequel shocker! EA is busy sourcing talent for Skate 3. Can they beat a plastic board?



The upcoming God Of War film will be true to the story of the games – except for one *huge* twist at its climax.



Spielberg's action adventure game (formally known as LMNO) is now called Eve... hopefully like the lady, not the sci-fi MMO.

Aliens: Colonial Marines is *not* dead and will be out next summer.

Eidos has trademarked the name Kane & Lynch: Dog Days. Expect more news imminently.



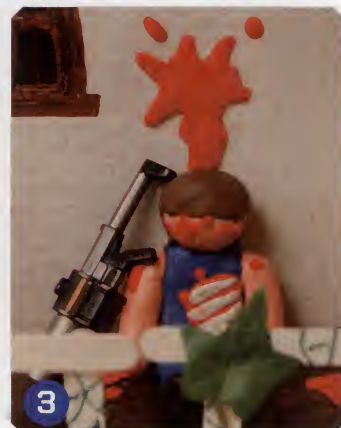
Saddle up that chocobo: Square Enix is planning a Final Fantasy XIV beta in September.

There's more than one way to break an ankle! Talks are under way to use Tony Hawk Ride's peripheral for a Silver Surfer action game.



Clay of the dead

Resident Evil's fan-made movie



And you thought claymation was only there to pay Nick Park's mortgage. This movie tribute to the original Resident Evil has everything from giant snake monsters to zombie dogs, and it's the work of one kid and a pile of plasticine.

"I grew up with the characters – it's a classic," says Michael Gigliotti, fan and wannabe filmmaker. You can watch the video at snipurl.com/l5ymi. Not only does it cut the survival horror storyline to a concise two minutes, but there's plenty of gore for the Resi purists. It's one of the reasons Gigliotti decided to

use clay. "You can do really neat blood effects."

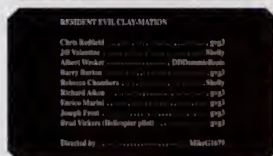
The film took around five months to complete, with Gigliotti shooting a scene a day. It doesn't sound much, but stop motion capture isn't exactly the most dynamic of mediums. It was worth the work though, the video is racking up hits online and he's even had a mention on the official Capcom site. "I'm hearing from a lot of people that they want me to do Resident Evil 2," says Gigliotti. "You will have to stay tuned to find out." Probably worth checking his youtube account in another six months then.

1 The whole Resi gang, from Wesker to Jill Valentine, complete with plasticine lady lumps. 2 Creator Gigliotti sets up a shot, moving each figure by a fraction of a millimetre to create a single frame. Now you see why it took him five months to finish. 3 Look at the zombie's tiny ribs! Apparently clay is a great medium for gore fans. 4 Quiet on set! Gigliotti takes a shot.

A beautiful plasti-scene

Two minutes in Raccoon Forest...

Here are some of the highlights you can look forward to in the miniature masterpiece. The Raccoon Forest scene moves quickly from the arrival at the mansion to zombies, snake monsters, Wesker's betrayal, the confrontation with the Tyrant, and the all-important explosion.





Our favourite? Got to be the tubby Ken look-alike, far right.

Record breakers

Dedication (and sewing skills) is what you need

It might not be breaking the land speed record, or jumping 20 buses on a flaming tricycle, but if it's good enough for the Guinness World Records, it's good enough for us. 376 eager cosplayers recently gathered at the MCM Expo in London to show off their sewing skills and break the world record for the largest gathering of people dressed as game characters.

The MCM Expo is a convention that celebrates games, sci-fi, and anime, and this year it provided a gathering point for Britain's army of cosplayers. The rules for the record attempt were strict: costumes couldn't be swapped or shared, participants had to be wearing

their full outfits simultaneously for 15 minutes and multimedia characters had to have appeared in videogames first. So Lara Croft is fine, but Catwoman doesn't count.

Damien Field, who helped organise the official adjudication of the record on behalf of Guinness World Records, has heard that the UK's title may fall foul of the German contingent: "We've been informed that the organisers of this year's Cologne Games Con will attempt to break the record." It's just like the Great War all over again... except this time there's no mustard gas or whistles, just wigs, eyeliner and grown men in obscure Final Fantasy costumes.

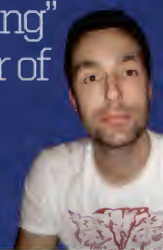


WHO SAID THAT?

VIP quotes

"Blur to me is completely underwhelming"
Meow! Saucer of milk for EA's

Patrick Soderlund



"I love God Of War."

Big angry

Mike Tyson

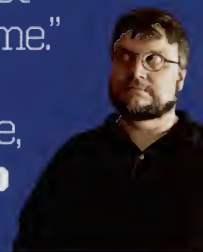
hearts big angry Kratos.



"I was disappointed with the first Hellboy game."

You're not the only one,

Guillermo del Toro



"If Activision liked it, then they should have put a ring on it. Oh great, now Beyonce is going to sue me too." Brutal Legend's **Tim Schafer** keeps his lawyer happy.

OPM HOT TOPIC

What game would you save from a burning house?



Phil Wright
Producer,
Codemasters

"Gitaroo Man on PS2. I didn't invest all those hours enduring crippling RSI to defeat Mojo King Bee and his ilk, only to see it go up in flames!"



Richard Jones
Lead games designer,
Rebellion

"Gran Turismo. Erm, no, Gran Turismo 4. Erm, no, 3. I think I'd probably burn it if I had to make that choice. Any Gran Turismo I could get my hands on."



Patrick Fortier
Creative director,
A2M

"Oh no, my house! I'll grab Gran Turismo 3, but I also need to save my memory card because it contains all the replays of my most intense races!"



Nick Baynes
Game director,
Black Rock

"Noby Noby Boy. That would involve carrying my whole PS3 out of the house with me, so it's possible I'd get slowed down and die in the flames."



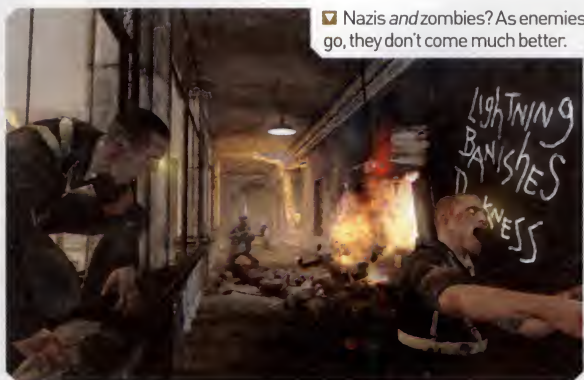
Dead loss

Editor-in-chief Tim Clark reveals his Nazi zombie shame

I couldn't get on with *World At War*. After the genius of *Modern Warfare* it felt like a fake Gucci handbag (bear with me, chaps) in so far as it looked fine from a distance, but up close the shoddy workmanship was all too obvious. Whereas *Modern Warfare* was a ball-tightening rollercoaster of expertly-crafted set-pieces, *World At War* had you labouring to tick off busywork objectives and knocking your shins against tiny invisible barriers. It only hardened my perception of *Infinity Ward* as the John to Treyarch's Yoko in the *Call Of Duty* developer love-in.

So when everyone in the office started banging on about how brilliant *World At War*'s Nazi Zombies mini-game was, I ignored them. As is my way. But thanks to the summer lull in the release schedule, and the fact I only play co-op online now, I recently decided to take a look. For the uninitiated two readers, you and three comrades (there's almost no point playing unless you have a four-player team)

After that, the buggers start running. The fact two bites can kill means an unattended breach can see you all wiped out in seconds. So from here the game charges to its panicked, swears and invariably hilarious climax as whoever's been lucky enough to get the ray gun out of the magic box tries to keep the others (armed, usually, with farmer's shotguns) alive. The mode is nails hard and as far as I'm aware has no end. To mitigate the brutal difficulty we began leaving the last zombie alive at the end of each wave, with one



▼ Nazis and zombies? As enemies go, they don't come much better.

"I've never laughed so hard while playing PS3."

defend an area from wave after wave of Axis coffin-dodgers, frantically boarding up windows between rounds and spending your hard-earned points on opening new parts of the map or taking a lucky dip in the magic new weapons box.

The first bite is the deepest

It's brilliant for several reasons. First off, they're Nazis and zombies. That's gaming's two most popular enemies rolled into one right there. Also, the initial five waves are so pedestrian, that only idiots would get overrun. (I'm getting to that.) So, for about 20 minutes or so you can leisurely pop the shamblers as they approach, musing about your imploding lovelife, the lack of food in the fridge and Arsenal's contrarian transfer policy at the same time. With a cool breeze coming through the open window and a pint of orange squash, it's as good as life currently gets.

player babysitting Steven (for that is what we always called him) long enough for everyone else to mend the windows and have a go on the magic box. For a while it worked. We began getting to level ten with regularity, adopting our own windows to guard and talking less as we concentrated on dead-heading the rotbags. Then we got greedy, and Steven killed us all.

When it happened three players were in the magic box room, sticking their fingers in the till, when commissioning editor Leon began to scream "he's killed me!" over the USB mic. One by one we jogged in to revive him and – I still don't know how – all died at Steven's decayed hands. A lot of blame got thrown around as the 'game over' screen popped up, but I've never laughed so hard while playing PS3 either. So I guess this is my apology to Treyarch. It is a magic mini-game. But hey, even Yoko had *Walking On Thin Ice*.

LETTER FROM HOME

Nathan Ditum is downloading stuff twice and going kart racing

Tiny whinge: downloading stuff more than once sucks. Every time I go into Home there's at least one area I already have which I have to download again for some teeny update. The worst thing is, I'm left hanging around the entrance while it downloads in the background, trying not to make awkward virtual eye contact with any of the other guys hovering on the periphery. This month it was the EA Sports complex, which has ditched the not-working golf zone for extra kart racing. There's still a madness to queuing for not-real activities (full up is it, EA? Your *non-existent kart track*?) but also I really love winning, so I played it for ages anyway. It's kinda rubbish.





LG GD900 Crystal

Finally, a phone that can make you look like a futuristic super villain while you call your mum and ask her what's for tea.

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carphonewarehouse.com

JVC GD32X1

The obsession with size zero TVs continues with this tiny 6.4mm, super-bright LCD. Doesn't anyone care what this trend is doing to the sales stream of budget-bought HDTVs?

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jvc.eu



Bombshade

Give your living room that bachelor-Elitz feel with this lampshade. Decommissioned weapons are so hot right now.

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wheredidyoubuythat.com



E Ink Digital Watch

These time machines use electronic paper instead of light to let you know you're late for that super important interview.

£112

phosphorwatches.com



Want that

Lust-have kit for PlayStation people

Carboton Maitresse Speakers

The carbon fibre speakers look like the bastard child of Darth Vader and a table leg, but have a sound quality to rival heaven's own angelic choirs.

£30,500

carboton.com

Zippe Scooter

Impress eco-phobic girls and laugh in the face of the petrol-pumping bogies with an electric scooter that plugs straight into the wall.

£899

zippe.co.uk



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press

Sony Vaio

VGN-TT21M/N

Spend your way out of recession
with Sony's supermodel laptop

£1,550
vaio.sony.co.uk

In a nutshell

Thanks to a killjoy emphasis on affordability and the democratisation of technology, mini laptops have historically been given a wide berth by aspirational Echo Boomers and the fiscally insane. But with Sony's incredibly powerful, empirically gorgeous new Vaio TT series of ultra portable laptop, 'cheap' has well and truly been turned off at the wall and 'affordable' has once again been reclaimed by the stratospherically minted.

What's so special?

Unlike breathtakingly beautiful humans, the TT has not traded depth and ability for bewitching skin-deep allure. Scratch beneath its 'intense noir' or 'gold fever' surface – not literally, it's made of carbonfibre – and you'll find a 11.1" X-black LCD screen, twin antennas equipped with the 'Draft n' WiFi standard (the latest and fastest), and an Intel Core 2 Duo processor. If you can accept the knowledge that you'll be playing Flash Pool on something smarter than you, then this is all the computer you could hope to own.

Tell me more

Not content with just shelling out £1,550 for the premium vanilla, only-very-highly-specced model? Then why not go 'Vaio For You' and create a bespoke TT? For £2,505.99, the VGN-TT25X boasts an Ultimate Carbon finish, 1.4GHz 'brain', 128GB of silent, fast, Solid State Drive, 4GB RAM, a Blu-ray drive and 'free' engraving. Perfect for decorating your new purchase with the address and floor plan to your spacious loft apartment. That way the thieves who pinch your TT have something to go on and won't needlessly break things while fumbling around in the dark.

Chassis

The Vaio TT's superflyweight mass and heavyweight durability is down to a state-of-the-art carbonfibre chassis. So should you, some day, find yourself clinging desperately onto a TT as the oxygen masks deploy from the ceiling, you can take some comfort in the knowledge that while neither you nor the black box may survive, your Kings Of Leon albums almost certainly will.

Keys

Do you find your freakishly long nails make typing those 48-page letters to the council about turning the moon off after midnight awkward? Well, despite its compact dimensions the TT's keys have optimum spacing and slight indentations on their faces to avoid typing errors when you're in full flow.



Screen

The 16:9 LCD WXGA screen helpfully incorporates LED tech to prolong battery life, and measures in at 11.1". That's the length of five credit cards, which, incidentally, is also the number you're likely to max out paying for the TT. Meanwhile, Sony's impressive X-black technology delivers deep, abyssal blacks that will visibly dim any cafe you visit.

Security

It's a dangerous world out there, but the Vaio TT comes with Trusted Platform Module tech (TMT) to protect your archive of Lolcats with a level of cryptographic overkill that could drive a MI5 analyst insane. Decide to pimp your TT and you can even opt to have a biometric fingerprint reader - perfect for wrong-footing serial killers in their 'research phase'.

The facts

- 1.2GHz Intel Core 2 Duo
- 160GB Serial ATA hard drive
- 2GB 800MHz DDR3 SDRAM
- DVD+-RW/+R DL/RAM drive
- 11.1" X-black LCD WXGA (1366x768)
- Battery life: up to 9 hours
- 2 USB 2.0 slots
- HDMI slot

PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up ▼ Down ● Non mover + New entry

PS3

- 1 ● Fight Night Round 4
- 2 ▲ Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood
- 3 ▼ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10
- 4 ▲ Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen
- 5 ▲ Virtua Tennis 2009
- 6 ▼ UFC 2009: Undisputed
- 7 ▲ inFamous
- 8 ▼ Ghostbusters
- 9 ▲ Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare
- 10 ▼ Prototype

Source chart-track.co.uk

PS2

- 1 ▲ Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince
- 2 ▼ Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen
- 3 ▲ FIFA 09
- 4 ▲ Call Of Duty: World At War
- 5 ▲ Ben 10 Alien Force
- 6 ▲ Tomb Raider Underworld
- 7 ▲ Ice Age 3: DOD
- 8 ● Ghostbusters
- 9 ▼ Indiana Jones ATSO
- 10 ▲ WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2009

Source chart-track.co.uk

PSP

- 1 ● Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
- 2 ▲ Transformers: ROTF
- 3 ▼ FIFA 09
- 4 ▲ Harry Potter ATHBP
- 5 ▼ Resistance Retribution
- 6 ● Football Manager 2009
- 7 ▲ Ben 10 Alien Force
- 8 ▼ Need For Speed Undercover
- 9 ▲ X-Men Origins: Wolverine
- 10 ▼ Rock Band Unplugged

Source chart-track.co.uk

The PlayStation entertainment plan

Fill up your life with our monthly guide

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AUG 03 Anger management Watch Brian Clough's disastrous time at Leeds United in the movie retelling, <i>The Damned United</i> , out on Blu-ray today. snipurl.com/mftra	04 Issue 36 on sale If the piping hot news and reviews you're reading right now don't melt your brain, let us know what you think at opm@futurenet.com			07 Black magic Guns and occult-dabbling Nazis. What more does a shooter need? <i>Wolfenstein</i> is released for PS3 today. wolfenstein.com		
	11 Bowled over England take on Australia at Headingley in the fifth day of the fourth Test. Unless we've all ready lost. cricinfo.com			14	15 Rocking Bono Bono takes a break from single-handedly saving the world to play with his band, U2, at Wembley Stadium. u2.com	
17 Dark stars Crysis 2 developer Crytek leads the line-up of game devs flashing their best bits at GDC Europe in Cologne. gdc europe.com			21 Anti-Hitler League Brad Pitt takes on Hitler in Tarantino's latest project, <i>Inglourious Basterds</i> , which is released at cinemas today. inglouriousbasterds-movie.com	22 Rock bands Brave the suspect latrines and dodgy late-night outers for acts like The Killers, Lily Allen, Lady Gaga at V Festival. vfestival.com		
24 Funny man Russell Howard - you know, the blonde one who's sometimes on Never Mind The Buzzcocks - is at London's Soho Theatre. russell-howard.co.uk			27 Pink Scotch Enter Shikari, the boys who've bashed rock and trance together and then set fire to the remains, play at the Edge Festival in Edinburgh. theedgefestival.co.uk	28 Zap pow! Face the Joker, Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy in the super hero brawler, <i>Batman: Arkham Asylum</i> , out today on PS3. batmanarkham.asylum.com		30 Black stars Another reason to get the tent out and not wash for three days. Radiohead headline the last day of Reading Festival. readingfestival.com
31 Skip work Ah, Bank Holiday. A day when it's the law to lie on your sofa, playing your favourite games in your pants. Enjoy. bankholidaydates.co.uk	1 Sep Issue 36 on sale. Subscribe now on page 36		04 Gamer on Have they finally made a decent film about videogames? Maybe. Get yourself to the cinema today to see <i>Gamer</i> and decide for yourself. gamerthemovie.com			



Cry Wolf...

And win Wolfenstein and an HDTV

Nazis are bad enough, but now they're fiddling around with black magic? Not on your watch! The classic Wolfenstein shooter series is back, complete with hero BJ Blazkowicz, and to celebrate we're giving you the chance to win a copy of the game on PS3 and a brand new Samsung 37" LCD TV to play it on. Four runners up will win a copy of the game for PS3. Simply answer the following question to be in with a chance of winning:

In what year was the first game in the series, Castle Wolfenstein, released?

A 1990 **B** 1981 **C** 1985

Text using the word 'Wolf' followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name and address to 87474.

Alternatively, you can enter at futurecomps.co.uk/opm35. The winner will be picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date: 1 Sep 09.

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7 Aug
Wolfenstein
released



FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM

This month we visit OPS2 #50

Not one but four slightly terrifying hard-bodied wrestling ladies to choose from as we brought up the half-ton with issue #50 – Stacy Keibler, Trish Stratus, Sable and Torrie Wilson each had their own cover to celebrate our exclusive feature on the original **WWE Smackdown vs Raw**.

News led with an excited look at the latest **Pro Evolution Soccer 4** info, the highlight of which was that Konami's footy master had secured high-profile Euro club licences for the first time ("You can forget 'Oranges 24' and all that nonsense" we said, prematurely). There was also the announcement of Rockstar's **The Warriors**, a remake of **Altered Beast**, and the better-than-people-give-it-credit-for scream-style high school slasher **Obscure**.

There was big excitement in previews over the tantalisingly near-release **Star Wars: Battlefront** ("The Star Wars game fans have wanted for so long"), and even more so over **GTA IV** ("It's looking like the most essential PS2 game ever"). Then less so over **Need For Speed Underground** and **FIFA 2005** ("Knowing football, this could all come to nowt," we warned), before a final surge for **MGS3: Snake Eater** ("Stellar").

Magic and mystery dominated reviews: magic in the parallel psycho-adventures **Second Sight** ("A great story told with class, style and beautiful looks") and **Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy** ("Brilliantly satisfying to play"), which both scored 8/10. And mystery as in 'where the hell is the online in **Resi Outbreak**', which faltered in single-player and scratched a 7/10. Bottom of the pile was **Formula Challenge**, a "thoroughly terrible" F1 rip-off barely worth its 1/10.

FIVE MINUTE SKIVE

Games to play
when the boss
isn't looking



Jurassic Fight Club: Turf Wars

What's better than one dinosaur? Two of them having a massive rumble! Pit favourites like the Tyrannosaurus Rex against its scaly friends in a fight to the death.

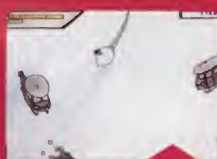
snipurl.com/kalj3



Beerland

Click on the stick figures and objects in the pub to see toilet monsters, punters supping on pints of wee wee and flaming pigs running rampage. A normal night down the local then.

snipurl.com/kalj3



Seed Of Destruction

Ride around on a massive sperm, wearing a cowboy hat and barging helicopters. Be warned: if your parents catch you playing this, you're going straight to the psychiatrist.

snipurl.com/kalk0

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And you'll get You Don't Mess With The Zohan & Casino Royale on Blu-ray!



As well as featuring 1080p Full HD, both of these Blu-rays are packed with extras, including BD-Live-compatible exclusive content.



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Preview

43

BRUTAL LEGEND

"F minor, A, 'and after aaaall your my - hang on - E... er, B. You're my Wonderwaaall.' Hang on, I'll get it this time. Um, F..."

PlayStation Official Magazine - UK Previews

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

This month's full of surprises. Like the fact that after playing PES 2010 and FIFA 10 we can't ignore that FIFA (whisper it!) looks the better game. Then there's The Saboteur, which is amazing fun - something we weren't expecting after developer Pandemic's recent form. It's got great combat, brilliant climbing and a slick, stylised '40s Paris to explore.

Dead To Rights: Retribution has been an equally mild yet pleasant shock. We didn't expect much from its basic 'cop on a mission' shooty, punchy quests, but it turns out it's a decent, if unimaginative, dose of action. And the ability to play as the police dog and chew crims rocks.

Even RPG-FPS hybrid Borderlands surprised us. The cel-shaded looks already had us intrigued, but we weren't prepared for how entertaining its enemy-slotting shootouts would be. We like.

The only non-shock? The Beatles: Rock Band is incredible, as we always knew it'd be. Even if you're not a fan, you'll be singing along. Oh yes. You *will* sing.



40

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010

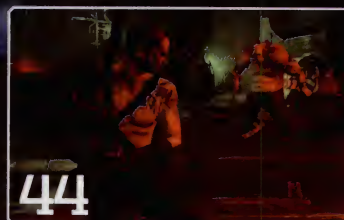
The new visuals are beautiful - especially Nando - but how does PES shape up on the field of play? Find out in our first hands-on.



42

THE SABOTEUR

Visit Paris and see the beautiful Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Nazi command post. Then use bombs to implement your radical urban renewal plan.



44

MARS

Forget gleaming space domes, this red planet is a monster-filled hell hole, where a disaster has left factions fighting to control their most precious resource: water.

Preview



Quick pitch

The fab 45

Play 45 classic songs from the band's mop-top origins through to their early psychedelic days.

Perfect harmony

Three singers can try to match the band's three-part harmonies. Keyword: 'try'.

Kitted out

A range of new Rock Band instruments are based on the band's iconic gear.

The Game's A Bit Special Format PS3 ETA 9 September Pub EA Dev Harmonix

The Beatles Rock Band

△ John ○ Paul × George □ Ringo

Did you know?

The Beatles cheated in a 1962 phone-in to find the biggest band in Liverpool by ringing up a local newspaper and pretending to be different people.

The band were rejected by Decca Records who said, "We don't like their sound and guitar music is on the way out."

The Beatles' Rock Band came about after George Harrison's son, Dhani, suggested it to the president of MTV. Dhani then worked with Harmonix to create a demo version that convinced the remaining Beatles.

The Beatles were nearly lynched in the Philippines after refusing a dinner invitation from the president's wife. It was taken as a national insult and the band ran for the airport while their tour staff were beaten up.

It doesn't matter whether you like The Beatles or not, this is going to be huge on a block-out-the-sun scale. The biggest band in all creation releasing their best stuff in a music game so you can play along and pretend to be your favourite (it's John, isn't it? Of course it is). Obviously it's going to be big. But it's not until we start to play that we realise how big.

Twist and shout

Whether you like it or not, The Beatles are hardwired into your brain. When you hear the chorus to I Am The Walrus or the opening guitar to Here Comes The Sun, there's an inescapable urge to sing along. Especially, say, in a dark room full of people as you finish off a beer and scrape the last of the Doritos out of a bowl. The presentation's especially

tempting. It's far brighter and more colourful than previous Rock Bands, with smiling, instantly recognisable caricatures of the Fab Four. Iconic locations and performances like The Cavern Club or Abbey Road Studios also make for a far more cheery backdrop than previous dingy venues. Each one captures the spirit of the moment perfectly with film grain effects, camera cuts and flickering focus changes adding loads of personality. Throughout, the backdrops are beautifully animated and it's worth sitting out a few games just to watch.

Trippy dream-like sequences also link together segments of the Beatles' career which, in-game, specifically covers their 1962 to '69 stretch with EMI. So far the only tracks confirmed are Back In The USSR, Day Tripper, Get Back, Here Comes the Sun, I Am The

Walrus, I Feel Fine, I Saw Her Standing There, I Want To Hold Your Hand, Octopus's Garden and Taxman. There will be plenty of DLC, and while nothing's been revealed, the rumours are entire albums could be on the way as well as some of the band's solo work. Whatever the content, however, you'll have to own The Beatles game – downloadable tracks won't work with the original Rock Band.

It plays almost identically to previous games (play along to the music, matching the on-screen prompts) but there have been a few changes. The biggest is the ability to sing three-part harmonies – something that characterises the band's sound – as well as play guitar, bass and drums, making this a six-player game. You don't have to, thank Christ – you still score points as long as everyone



Find a left-handed friend if you want to play along authentically.



The surviving Beatles were on hand to ensure good likenesses.

matches the main vocal – but there are massive points to be scored if you pull it off. There's also an in-game training mode to help with singing and a drum tutor for Ringo's parts.

Other tweaks include 'Beatlemania' the new name for the bonus-scoring power-up Overdrive. You still fill the bar by playing certain sequences of notes perfectly but the whammy bar no longer bends pitch. You'll gain Beatlemania by wagging it; it just won't affect the songs to stay true to The Beatles' sound. And with George Harrison's son Dhani, wife Olivia, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and Yoko Ono overseeing the game's production, this is about as authentic as you'll ever get.



The instruments Custom Beatles gear

Ringo's drums

Ludwig drum set
The famous kit features the unmistakable bass drum skin on the front and a shiny new black oyster pearl finish.



Paul's bass

Höfner Violin Bass
The left-handed McCartney chose this because its symmetry made it easier to play the wrong way around.



George's guitar

Gretsch Duo Jet
Mainly used during the Cavern Club era, this features a chunky Bigsby model vibrato – the first ever whammy bar.



John's guitar

Rickenbacker 325
This is really a student guitar with a three-quarter length neck. Lennon used it during the Beatles' early years.





Preview



Classic Series | Format PS3 ETA October Pub Konami Dev Konami

Pro Evolution Soccer 2010

△ Torres ● Visuals ⊗ Kuyt ◻ Gameplay

It's just as we'd hoped: PES 2010 looks *fantastic*. Granted, we've only been able to play in one stadium so far, and with only two teams... but it's clear that this is a massive visual step up on last year's game. The stadium is Anfield, making its PES debut, and recreated with such breathtaking accuracy that even the digital clock in the south-east corner of the ground looks spot on. And the teams – Liverpool and Barca – match those levels of detail, with real-looking cloth movements on shirts and magnificently realised face and skin

textures. Nando Torres looks just *beautiful*. Yeah, we said it.

Midfield struggles

Gameplay wise, it's not such good news, for now anyway. PES plays noticeably slower this year, enabling you to have more time on the ball, and therefore to think more strategically when in possession. But players feel jarringly cumbersome, making it almost impossible to beat a man using pace alone. Konami insists this is simply because new animations are yet to be implemented. Let's hope so.

There are some clear areas of improvement. It's possible to hit the target when shooting from a narrow angle – something that was ludicrously difficult in last year's game. Heading has been tweaked so that players properly attack the ball, and we saw no instances of the ref blowing up for fouls when we'd clearly won the ball – the biggest annoyance in PES 2009. But most of these are common-sense bug fixes rather than new features, and PES 2010 needs to up its game come October if it wants to keep up with always-improving rival FIFA 10.



▲ Lovely models, but PES still needs some intense skillz work before October.



Wish list

Improved AI

No more defenders running away from the ball/their man/the pitch, please, and have players make sensible runs off the ball. It can't be that big an ask.

Real modes

Master League is beginning to show its age. PES needs a proper long-term mode that incorporates all the leagues and cups, as well as the Europa and Champions Leagues.

Mend online

Seriously: no more stupid Konami IDs, or fiddling with ports, or weird roundabout patching methods. Let us just boot up the game and play each other. Preferably lag-free.

Could Be A Contender

Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

The son of a murdered triad boss comes to Liberty City and joins his uncle's gang.

The reality

PSP game with everything you'd expect from GTA - chaos, shootouts and driving through bus stops full of pedestrians.

The hook

Returning to the series' 2D roots, the action is viewed in a stylised top-down perspective.

The inspiration

The DS original, but without the screen-poking mini-games used to hotwire cars. It'll use the PSP's buttons instead.

The chances

It's GTA. It's Rockstar. Plus it scored hugely on the DS. It'll be amazing.

Format PSP ETA Winter Pub Rockstar Dev Rockstar Leeds



On The Box Judged by their covers



Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes

Rival teams compete to look in one direction at the same time.

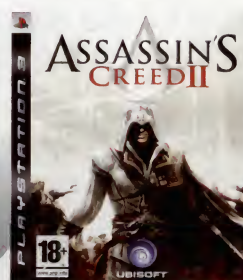
Format PS3 ETA 18 Sep Pub LucasArts



Dante's Inferno

Players must create a costume that'll get them past Torture Garden's strict fetish door policy. From there they play a series of mini-games to avoid seeing anything permanently damaging.

Format PS3 ETA Feb 2010 Pub EA



Assassin's Creed II

Ubisoft goes for a Buzz! style casual makeover where contestants compete to guess the celebrity chin. For extra points there's also a bonus round: "What hand's the knife in?"

Format PS3 ETA 20 Nov Pub Ubisoft



Original Concept: Format PS3 ETA 30 November Pub EA Dev Pandemic

The Saboteur

⬆ Nazis ⬆ Paris ⬆ Snapping ⬆ Necks

After the sloppy Mercenaries 2, canned Batman game and awful Lord Of The Rings: Conquest, I wasn't expecting much from my hands-on with The Saboteur. Pandemic's recent success rate is dangerously close to 'monkeys could do better' on the OPM quality meter. (One up from the vworp-vworp siren and flashing red light.) But after shooting up Nazis and leaping across Parisian rooftops, there's good news: Pandemic is back on track.

Run for the hills

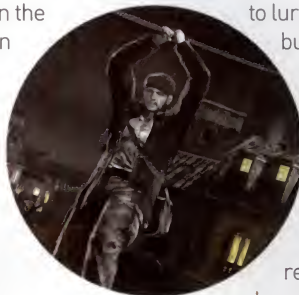
Here's the exact moment I realised I liked it: during a desperate escape from a fuel depot raid I left the city and headed into twisty rural lanes.

Freedom seemed imminent. Until I ran into 20 of Hitler's finest. There was an Indiana Jones moment as nobody moved for a second. Then the banjo music started up (in my head, obviously) and the chase began.

The moment of calm was enough to realise how much fun it had been running through the streets, trading bullets with the Third Reich, pinching cars and snapping Nazi necks to steal uniforms. It's similar to Mercenaries 2 but instead of flailing through open spaces, this uses cobbled streets and alleys to contain and concentrate the

action. The real surprise is the climbing. It's heftier than Assassin's Creed as you swing your body weight to lurch between window sills, but it's hugely liberating to reach the rooftops as angry soldiers circle below. The unusual colour system also works – occupied Paris is black and white and completing missions returns colour to the world.

In practice, flashes of pigment pick out important elements – Nazis are highlighted in red, for example. It adds a strangely magical feel to the world and makes an already interesting game even more attractive.



Dev talk



"In the black and white occupied areas we really try to sell the mood. You'll see Nazis harassing people on the streets which can ultimately lead to executions which you can stop if you want."

Tom French
Lead designer,
Pandemic

Viva liberté Paint the town red and free Paris from the Nazis



Go anywhere in Paris, attacking and disrupting German war operations with stealth, guns and bombs. Liberate the city and you'll be bringing the colour back to gay Paree.

Quick pitch

Metal god

You play Eddie Riggs, who's transported to a rock-themed fantasy world to battle demons.

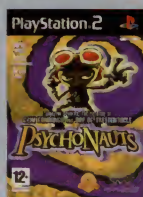
Extended mix

Fight with an axe or guitar, and explore big open areas in a hot rod.

Prince of darkness

Ozzy Osbourne plays The Keeper Of Secrets, who upgrades your weapons and car.

Can't wait?
Play these



Psychonauts

(PS2, Majesco)
Brutal Legend creator Schafer's last game followed a psychic child battling a brain-sucking fish. Brilliant fun.



Ratchet & Clank: Too Big to Fail

(PS3, Sony)
This furry platformer's blend of funny cut-scenes and baddy-whacking action is a PS3 essential.



Everything's music-themed, including headbanger enemies and guitar weapons.

Original Concept **Format** PS3 **ETA** 16 October **Pub** EA **Dev** Double Fine Productions

Brutal Legend

Ⓐ Rock Ⓞ 'til ✕ They Ⓚ Drop

We've seen plenty of Jack Black's deadpanning roadie Eddie so far, proving the game is at least funny, but we've not had a chance to play it until now. It turns out slicing up undead druids or chasing down demonic bikers in a car is just as much fun as it looks.

You axing?

The main thrust of combat is using an axe to hack at baddies or a guitar to unleash magical attacks – frying

enemies with lightning or launching them into the air with a burst of flame. You can combine both to create combos, like using the guitar to pop a target up then wielding the axe like a bat to smash their liver for a home run. There are also team moves, using allies like Ophelia, a rock chick you meet early on. Tap Ⓐ and she'll leap into your arms so you can fling her at the enemy, her dual knives spinning.

One new trick we tried was the Relic Raiser. Throughout the land there are

strange markings which Eddie can read as guitar tab. Match the buttons as a line sweeps across the screen and you'll play the guitar, using the music to bring ancient artefacts back to life or raise them from the ground. In our case we revived Eddie's car, The Deuce, which came in handy during a race to escort a tour bus along a demon-infested road. A task made easier by the chain guns and flaming exhaust upgrades we'd bought earlier. Street legal? Hell, no. Fun? Definitely.

☑ "The captain has chosen to put on the fasten seatbelt sign at this time."



Improved for PS3 **Format** PS3 **ETA** 15 September **Pub** 505 Games **Dev** Gaijin Entertainment

IL-2 Sturmovik Birds Of Prey

Ⓐ Fly Ⓞ Shoot ✕ Crash Ⓚ Burn

There hasn't been a good flight sim on PS3 since... There hasn't been a good flight sim on PS3. So at least this WW2 shooter doesn't have to worry about competition. And in fairness, it's more than decent. It drops you in the seat of 50 different period planes, such as Spitfires, to take part in famous aerial conflicts,

like bombing runs over Berlin. Plus you can play it as a hardcore simulation or arcade blaster. So, arcade blaster, then. It also features the worst possible feature for anyone afraid of flying – real-time damage. As your plane gets shot up, holes appear in the wings and body. Not something we want to *actually* experience.



Preview

Quick pitch

Bossed about

Each enemy boss has a specialised behaviour that you'll need to learn and exploit.

Buy one, get one free

Seth and Pandora's stories and combat styles vary massively, so that's two playthroughs for the price of one.

Personal growth

Skill trees allow you to shape the progression of your hero's abilities.



▲ "HR Giger called and he wants his alien back."

The Next Big Thing **Format** PS3 **ETA** 2010 **Pub** TBA **Dev** Spiders

Can't wait?
Play these



Red Faction: Guerrilla

(PS3, THQ)
Take a trip to the Red Planet, and then smash everything to pieces in this open-world rebel romp.



Fallout 3

(PS3, Bethesda)
Can't get enough of the post-apocalyptic scene? Try mutant-packed America in 2277 with this action RPG.

Mars

⬆ Water ⬇ Fight ✕ Sun ☐ Burn

Warring water companies doesn't initially sound like the best premise on which to base an action RPG. But move the action to Mars, add mutants, massive bosses, cool weapons, a girl with psychic powers and a killer sun, and things suddenly get more interesting.

Legal aliens

In the distant future, Mars has been colonised, but a cataclysmic event has left the planet in ruins, and its inhabitants split into two camps: the True People and the slave Ashes. The new order is all about access to water, with people getting all stabby over who controls it. Jumping right into the middle of the wet and wild conflict, you play a water company soldier. You can

be Seth, a melee brawler who isn't afraid of a scrap, or Pandora, whose skills are based in magic, or 'technomancy'. She uses electrical and biological attacks to keep enemies at bay, but she's a teeny bit more fragile when it comes to hand-to-hand fighting. Whoever you choose, the combat relies on chaining combos for big carnage.

So it's big on action, but also RPG elements that give you more control over your character's progression. As you brawl and find ancient relics scattered around the planet you rack up knowledge points to spend on upgrades. So play as Seth and you can split these points between dual blades, two-handed weapons, or flails, depending on your preferred method of smiting. Spells, special attacks and

social abilities can also be upgraded – so not only can you beat the crap out of foes, but you can get the best price at the merchants, too. "Paaaand's worth of ammo? 70p to you, daaaahlin'."

Hot stuff

An element that stands out from the usual magic and melee mess is the chance to use *the sun* as a weapon in a mechanic that lead game designer Stephane Versini calls "light playing". Environments are partially destructible, and smashing up roves and columns lets in more light – flushing out inaccessible enemies and helping to burn up bosses. No word on whether you need a factor 30 power-up to prevent self-injury, but it's a good hook. Warring water companies FTW, then.

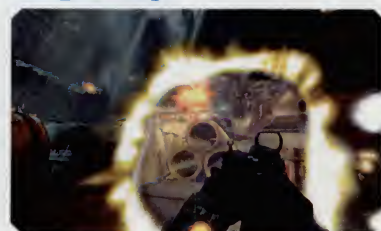
Can't Wait To Play...



Industry insiders reveal their PS3 faves

Max Belanger
Producer, Radical Entertainment

Singularity



"I've always been a big fan of time travel stories. I think it sounds like a really unique take on the idea - it has a lot of potential. I like games where you can make your own way through a level; where you can be inventive with what's thrown at you - it looks like a game that gives you loads of options."

Blur

"I really like the idea of combining the fast racing Bizarre Creations does with the concept of affecting other players in different ways, like blasting them off the screen - that's fun. Basically driving games plus messing with your opponents is always good."

Modern Warfare 2

"I'm excited about any Call Of Duty game. I love the massive battlescapes and the total frenetic action that's going on. And the way the weapons feel - I love throwing grenades - that's my favourite, just seeing guys flying."



▲ Hero Seth's look is very much Mad Max with a Superman cape.



▲ A slice 'n' dice traditionalist, blades are a favourite in combat.



▲ Fat man here has been deformed by solar gamma rays.



▲ The combo-heavy fighting will also feature the old classic: button matching events. Erm...yay?



Preview

Classic Series **Format** PS3 **ETA** October **Pub** EA **Dev** EA Vancouver

FIFA 10

△ Go ○ Your ⊗ Own □ Way

3 60° running is the future. Except it's not. In FIFA 10, it's the *now*, and it's brilliant.

Forget only being able to move your players in eight directions – in EA's latest (and greatest) rendition of the beautiful game your boys can move at any angle. There's a delightful satisfaction to beating a full back's ⊗ challenge by tapping →+↘ on the left stick at the right moment, knocking it past him, but only deviating your running direction very slightly. Indeed, the deftness is impossible to articulate with words – but once you play it, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it.

Otherwise it hasn't changed all that much from last year, save for the removal of a few issues that bugged the hell out of us. The aforementioned ⊗ tackle has been toned down so it's no longer successful every time, and fewer cut-scenes means the game feels less stop-start. (Quick free kicks, a staple of PES, have been incorporated to further speed things along.) We're still concerned about the 'keeper forcefield' – where goalies catch *everything* in the six-yard box, no matter who's challenging them – but otherwise, our latest hands-on has us all kinds of excited.

Virtual whiteboard

A huge step forward is the ability to create your own set-pieces. To do this, you select from one of eight quadrants adjacent to the penalty box, then map out the runs you want specific players to make when the ball is delivered. Our first go was fiddly – we only succeeded in repeatedly crashing the game – but it has stacks of potential, so long as the developers can prevent users creating money plays that succeed every time. Another feather in FIFA's cap, then. Latest score: EA 1, Konami 0.

Quick pitch

PES beater

Last season's number one footy game aims to widen its lead at the top of the PS3 table.

Let it flow

The advantage rule and fewer cut-scenes result in a much smoother footy experience.

Run anywhere

True 360° player movement enables subtle but deadly changes in direction.

Key ingredients FIFA 10



1 Matches in snow look lovely.



2 The set-piece editor is a genuine revolution.



3 Faces and kits are perfect.



4 Keepers are improved too.



Dark Horse **Format** PS3 **ETA** October **Pub** Namco Bandai **Dev** Volatile Games

Dead To Rights Retribution

△ Heel ○ Sit ⊗ Beg □ Kill

There are three things you need to know about this shooter remake. Firstly, the maverick cop/killer dog pairing still have names we'd have chosen for them if we were 11 years old: Jack Slate (yes!) and Shadow. Second, the gameplay is a mix of solid combo-and-counter fisticuffs and cover-based gunnage. And lastly, *you get to play as the dog.*

Ball breaker

This is big news for anyone who's ever wanted to play fetch with a mugger's danglies. In the level we played, big-shouldered hero Jack is limping, AI-guided, through a dank industrial alleyway (all the environments look very Streets Of Rage) escorted by Shadow, controlled by us. The controls are basic – **B**



activates sniff-o-vision that 'sees' hidden baddies, holding ⊗ runs you towards them, and then there's ○, our favourite, which mercilessly tears out a villain's manbits (developer Volatile calls these 'testikills'). Keep pressing it and Shadow goes on to tear out their throats as well.

If it sounds gimmicky it's because it probably needs to be – Slate's sections are pretty by the numbers. Shooting and aiming feels heavy, for example. Plus the hand-to-hand system is deep, but unless you're fighting one-on-one you get shot up real fast. They're not game-breaking issues, though, and there's a violently guilty pleasure to the basic action. Plus the chance to savage bad guys as a dog is surely going to make it all worthwhile.

⚠ Why bother risking your neck when you can risk man's best friend's instead?

Cast list



The cop

Jack Slate
Trained in the art of punching, shooting, and pooper scooping



The dog

Shadow
Jack's half-wolf buddy can smell out bad guys or fetch guns.



The father

Frank Slate
Jack's private dick dad was murdered in the original game... Hmm.



⚠ Combat feels big and violent but isn't too effective when the enemy starts packing heat.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ EA done good

OPM's PES fanboys take to loudly praising FIFA 10's new 360° running. Rightly so: it's bloody brilliant.

▲ Laying it down

Debut podcast a modest success. Especially Rach's line about her being the mag's "expert on small furry things". Give us a listen. Please?

▲ Nathan worship

Footage of Drake tackling vast ice caverns confirms once and for all that there's every other PS3 game, and then there's the new Uncharted.

▼ EA done bad

Charging for new Tiger Woods courses and content as soon as it's out? Naughty. What next, £4.99 to use Wembley in FIFA?

▼ Acting up

Activision claims it might stop making PS3 games if the price of the console doesn't come down. Yeah, and the Pope's thinking of becoming a Mormon.

▼ Online woes

Much as we love PSN, not being able to create your own parties turns playing any game with mates (Burnout excepted) into a Sisyphean challenge.





Preview



PlayStation Icon **Format** PS3 **ETA** October **Pub** Namco Bandai **Dev** Namco Bandai

Tekken 6

⬤ Paul ⬤ Law ⬤ Jin ⬤ Bosh!

Aside from the main event of kicking lumps out of each other in one-on-one fights, the devs are now talking up Tekken's new co-op story mode. Called Scenario Campaign, it has an old-school side-scrolling brawler feel to it as you move through levels, smashing up enemy waves and robot bosses. It's different to the diverting but ultimately balls Force modes of old, as you can still access your character's full move list. So while you run around and explore in third person, lock on to a target and it'll play like normal Tekken. Plus there are guns. We saw massive-haired Paul chewing through rent-a-goons with a minigun *and* a flamethrower. A step forward? Hardly, but after a hands-on we can happily say it feels smooth and fluent like a prettied-up and tweaked Tekken 3 (the best in the series so far).

Same but prettier Katamari on PS3



We Katamari (PS2, 2005)

The original race level from the PS2 classic saw you rumbling around a track collecting rivals, spectators and eventually gathering up entire buildings and small islands. The distinctive papercraft art style looks good, even with the blocky last-gen visuals.



Katamari Forever (PS3, 2009)

This time the Akebono Circuit level is rendered on PS3 in deliciously crisp HD. Crucially, however, the new game keeps the series' characteristic look intact. This shot also shows off one of the optional art styles, in this case a soothing pencil/watercolour finish.



✓ Roll up a huge ball and make people feel the sphere.

LOOK OUT!



Kid's Tricycle

Quick pitch

Play nicely

A new Scenario Campaign mode lets you play through a co-op story with a mate.

Rubber ball

A bouncing system lets you smash rivals into the floor and combo them off the rebound.

Mini me

Joining the PS3 version is a PSP edition with ad-hoc competitive modes and downloadable ghosts.



❑ New girl Mojime shows a ninja how her halberd works. "And the pointy bit goes here!"



Hit Developer **Format** PS3 **ETA** September **Pub** Tecmo Koei **Dev** Team Ninja

Ninja Gaiden Sigma II

△ Hack ○ Slash × Counter □ Die

Wait, wait, wait – where's the blood? When you slice the pyjama'd arms and/or legs off a creeping assassin in *Ninja Gaiden*, the limb is supposed to arc through the air followed by a delicate trail of claret. This is a series that's defined by huge amounts of blood splashed around like a slop-out at a slaughter house. Not anymore, though. In Team Ninja's extensively polished reissue of last year's ace but gory action diamond, all the red stuff's been tidied away in favour of wispy trails of purple smoke.

It's Team Ninja's own decision, according to the game's director Yosuke Hayashi (who replaces previous director Tomonobu Itagaki). Hayashi says the team nixed the blood in favour of looking 'cool'. Other changes include an extensive

reworking of the camera system – so, hopefully, no more botched combo strings because the screen zooms erroneously into the crotch of a nearby enemy – and the addition of two exclusive playable lady characters, Mojime and Ayane. We played them both – Mojime wields a big slicey halberd and Ayane has a jumpy sword-based attack style. Neither feels as fluid and natural as main man Ryu but they'll be good enough to make the online co-op mode a blast.

Crucially, the bottom line is that it's looking exceptional – an already great game packaged with loads of extras and improvements. The only real question is whether you should get excited about it so long after its initial release? From what we've seen so far, the answer is: definitely.

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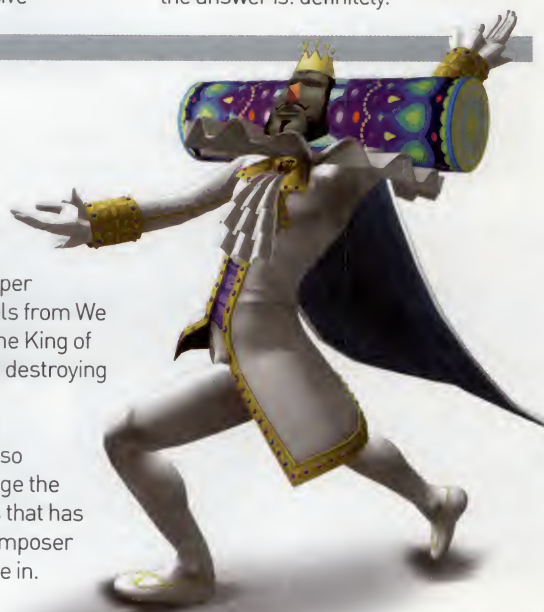
Classic Series **Format** PS3 **ETA** Winter **Pub** Namco Bandai **Dev** Namco Bandai

Katamari Forever

△ Just ○ Keep × On □ Rollin'

Katamari's ball-rolling collect-'em-up action is a part of PlayStation history. Which makes this 1080p semi-remake super exciting. The old stuff sees you returning colour to classic levels from *We ♥ Katamari* and *Katamari Damacy*, now in black and white because the King of All Cosmos (right) has forgotten them. New levels involve a robot King destroying all the stars, forcing you to gather junk to refill the night sky. Again.

Our hero, The Prince, has some fresh moves, like a new jump and a magnetic blast to suck up objects without touching them. There are also graphical filters like cel shading, pencil sketch or wood effects to change the look, but it's the obsessive compulsive desire to Hoover up entire cities that has us stoked. And while original creator Keita Takahashi isn't involved, composer Yu Miyake is returning to remix the series' ace J-pop soundtrack. We're in.





Dark Horse **Format** PS3 **ETA** October **Pub** Take Two **Dev** Gearbox

Borderlands

Ⓐ Sci-fi Ⓞ Western ✕ XP ⊕ Online

Headshots are basically the orgasm of the shooter experience. A pop, an explosion, that warm feeling inside and we're done. Using our sighted BLR Repeater to make meaty red puddles from the wild skags (hostile, sideways-headed dogs) outside the off-world town of Fyrestone, it's clear that Borderlands understands two things. First, the irresistible lure of XP (numbers ring up with every wet flash, and as you play through the game you continually upgrade the same character on and offline), and second, the digital sex of earning this XP for

yourself with sharp, accurate shooting – and by nailing those headshots.

Out on patrol

Basically, it's a mix of addictive levelling and fluid shooting that looks like a winner, even if we're still not convinced by the cut-out art style. Playing through the game's opening missions on the bleak planet of Pandora (including gunning down those skags for a local vendor), the structure is MMO-like, with tasks picked up from in-world characters and tracked through a quest log. There are vending machines for buying, selling and upgrading items (we found medical and

military variants), and complex skill trees on which to spend the experience you earn by shooting animals and, more dangerously, the numerous bandits surrounding the town.

You can also play online with up to three others – the game's drop-in-and-out co-op scales difficulty on the fly and seems, from what we've played, like Resistance 2 with Starship Troopers-style bugs. There are four character classes – soldier, hunter, caster and beefy berserker – and given the ruinous pasting our ragged bunch got on what was supposed to be an easy mission, co-ordination will be key. More soon.

Dev talk



"We had key words. We wanted growth, meaningful choice, and we wanted discovery and achievement. And there's a fifth one: Verhoeven. You know Paul Verhoeven? The movies are pretty dumb, but videogames are supposed to be fun, right?"

Randy Pitchford
President, Gearbox

The hook Why Borderlands isn't like other FPSs

Set in the distant future on a mineral-rich colony at the edge of the galaxy, Borderlands is an XP-heavy first-person shooter with a distinctive cel-shaded art style. It's moody and bleak, – a bit like Fallout 3, only with fully player-controlled shooting. Plus it comes with an online mode in which up to four players can work through the campaign together.



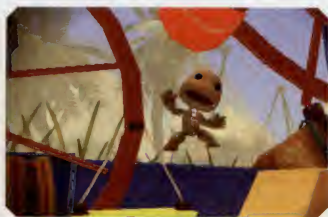
Prince Of Persia-style cel-shading? Check.



Your four-man (and lady) online squad.



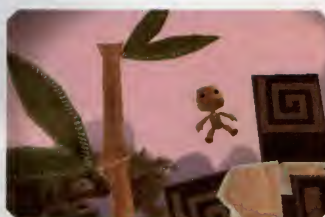
The ramshackle sci-fi western setting.



The tiny sack cloth hero returns. Yeah!



The vehicles are as varied as ever.



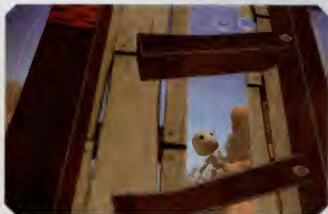
Needed: one tiny comedy outfit.



Classic platforming pleasure.



You can still grip objects and scenery.



Now you build levels on two planes.



Collect point bubbles for high scores.



Levels are still built from eye candy.



In the outback, pouches mean points.



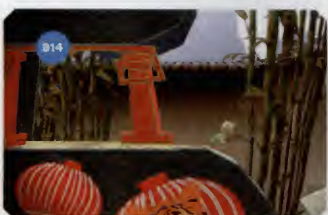
Walking like (and on) an Egyptian.



Across the Aborigine seesaw.



Timing is everything for swingers.



The bamboo suggests a Chinese level.



Quick! To the Baa-mobile!

Quick pitch

It's gone global

As well as Australia, the trailer shows levels in India, Egypt and a snowy tundra.

Tooled up

As with the PS3 version, the game will include building tools, such as switches and motors, to make your own levels.

Give it away

Win fame and friends by sharing your creations online.

Dev talk



"Our intention is that when you hook up your PSP and PS3 you'll unlock some special items. We're hoping the wealth of new materials will allow people to go off and be inspired all over again."

James Shepherd
Dev director,
Studio Cambridge

PlayStation Icon **Format** PSP **ETA** Winter **Pub** Sony **Dev** Sony Studio Cambridge

LittleBigPlanet PSP

△ Kangaroos ○ Koalas ⊗ Scorpions □ Sharks

Think of this as sackboy's gap year, filling the space between LittleBigPlanet and its PS3 sequel with a little trip to PSP. A little trip that features surfing, riding sheep and playing with oversized souvenir boomerangs, as we discovered in a recent hands on.

Our sackboy starts in a level that's as Australian as Hugh Jackman bench pressing a wallaby. Boomerangs can be pulled and flipped to form ramps, while Aborigines offer advice and koalas give rides to higher ground. You can even take the liberty of jumping into kangaroos' pouches to snap up point bubbles. The only hazards are a nastily speedy scorpion and the classic fall into a fiery pit. It feels slick, inventive and, even on PSP, damn pretty to look at. Impressively, none of

the detail or the homemade feel has been lost in the transition from big screen to small.

A quick poke about in the menu reveals plenty of stickers to slap on the scenery, offering up just a taste of the customisation options and level-building tools that are such a big part of the LBP experience. The demo version we played didn't have all the construction tools in place yet, but all the main game's switches, motors and creative thing-a-me-bobs will be in the final version.

On board

We took a bash at the surfing mini-game too; standing on a speeding surfboard, leaping about to try and grab prize bubbles suspended in the sky. When we weren't falling off the

board to our deaths, we were being snapped up by the giant shark that comes a-calling when you miss too many bubbles. It's pure hell-for-leather points-munching that'll be familiar to anyone who tried the speed challenges in the PS3 version. And if the trailer is anything to go by, you won't just be riding surfboards in the final game. We saw dodgems, rollercoasters and even a rather accommodating St Bernard.

So, we know the platforming works perfectly, the mini-games are mental and the whole thing is looking hotter than a Bondi barbecue. Now we just need to see more of the level creation stuff that's been confirmed, but kept tightly under wraps. After all, it's the user-created content that made the first LittleBigPlanet so awesome.



Preview

Homefront

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub THQ

Set in a near-future America where a fuel crisis leads to North Korea invading the US, this shooter has a big focus on technology, with weapons and gadgets based on what the Army are hoping to be using in 2027. Examples include the remote-control drone shown in this pic, or the Goliath – a robot tank you can send ahead of you to smash down walls and soften up the enemy before you get involved. Cool.



▲ Think Resistance 2 but replace the Chimera with, um, North Korea.

The latest on...

New shots, new games, new info



Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker

Format PSP ETA 2010 Pub Konami

New shots reveal Snake creeping through what looks like the jungles of MGS3. They also show an industrial plant and a new ally wearing a similar uniform to Snake, plus an octocamo-like mask.



LittleBigPlanet: Game Of The Year Edition

Format PS3 ETA Winter Pub Sony

Huge LPB news: a special edition is on the way that packs in most of the DLC released so far, including the new, amazing Ghostbusters pack.



Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines

Format PSP ETA 10 Nov Pub Ubisoft

New info: following on from the first game Altair follows Templar leader Armand Bouchart and his soldiers to Cyprus, then uses all his sword skills and free running moves to hunt them down.



Steambot Chronicles Battle Tournament

Format PSP ETA TBA Pub Atlus

Mech-on-mech action in the Trotmobile gladiator tournament. Earn cash, customise your bot and chat up cute mechanic, Venus. And stop laughing.



Warrior: Legends Of Troy

Format PS3 ETA Spring 2010 Pub Koei Tecmo

A Dynasty Warriors spin-off with an Ancient Greek theme. Win one: it's got accurate historical fact for the swots. Win two: it's got plenty of gore and dismemberment for the rest of us.



Vancouver 2010

Format PS3 ETA Winter 2010 Pub Sega

One of the sports confirmed for this official winter Olympic sportsfest is – *Ta da!* – the ski jump. You weren't expecting th... Oh, you were. Get ready for ridiculous heights, then, and too much spandex.



Alien Breed: Evolution

Format PSN download ETA Winter Pub Team 17

It was a top-down shooter 18 years ago, now it's getting a sexy, Unreal Engine makeover from creators Team 17, the guys who brought you Worms and exploding sheep. Could be huge.



Darksiders: Wrath of War

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub THQ

Apocalyptic horseman War recently showed off his combat chops with a new boss battle against a giant bat queen called Tiamat, who suffers from an unfortunate bomb allergy.



Dragon Age: Origins

Format PS3 ETA 20 October Pub EA

To emphasise how important decisions are in this RPG there are flash forwards showing the impact of your actions. Kill an important character and you'll find out what the future holds without them.



Hellion: Mystery Of The Inquisition

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub TBA

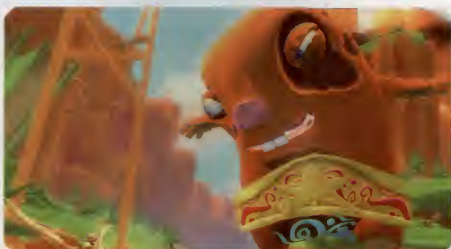
Playing as 13th century inquisitor Godric, this FPS has you fighting demons, performing exorcisms and brutally beating heretics. But Godric?



Fallout 3: Mothership Zeta

Format PS3 ETA Winter Pub Bethesda

An action-heavy slice of DLC that has you abducted by aliens. The good news is you'll finally get some more ammo for that Alien Blaster. The bad is that the release date's vague at best.



Fairytale Fights

Format PS3 ETA October Pub Playlogic

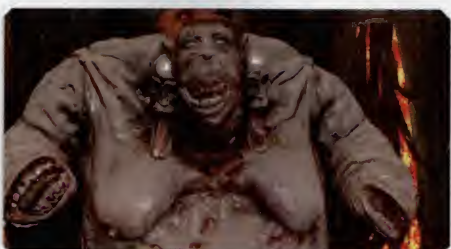
A vomiting beaver boss highlights the gory centre of this cartoon brawler with a fairytale theme. Fight with flesh-melting acid potions and carve up lumberjacks precisely with 'dynamic slicing'.



Call Of Duty

Format PSN ETA Winter Pub Activision

As well as the *working night vision goggles* that come with the Modern Warfare 2 Prestige Edition you'll also get a code to download the original COD for free, confirming it's heading to PSN.



Dante's Inferno

Format PS3 ETA January Pub EA

After battling this disgusting, vomiting Gluttony demon, Hell's newly revealed circle of lust – full of deformed lovers and a bare breasted Cleopatra boss – sounds like far more fun. Kinky.

Also on the way...

More hard game fact crammed in at the last possible minute

Capcom has confirmed a new **Street Fighter IV** sequel, revealing Gouken's daughter and SF Alpha 2's Rolento as possible fighters. Meanwhile, Square Enix's RPG **The Last Remnant** may never see a PS3 release. Calling all space traders! **Elite IV**, a classic interstellar trading sim that was big news in the '80s, is heading to PS3. There's more sci-fi from **Interstellar Marines**, an FPS that hasn't been seen in years but suddenly has a shiny new trailer. RPG brawler **Kenka Bancho: Badass Rumble** is heading to PSP and sees Japanese high school gangs fighting it out on the streets. Don't trade in that copy of **Ico** just yet: Sony has patented technology to let PS3 emulate PS2's Emotion Engine, meaning instant backwards compatibility for new PS3s – perhaps to coincide with the rumoured slim PS3? There's news that a new Hitman movie (yes, there's a sequel) will follow the plot of the **Hitman 5** game, due out in 2010. According to variety.com, "The movie catches title character, Agent 47, at a low point. He must build himself back up psychologically and physically to reclaim his mantle as the world's most feared assassin." Finally, Buzz! developer Relentless has revealed its new project, **The Blue Toad Murder Files**, an episodic murder mystery for PSN.

The Life of Xi

The complete timeline of Home's mystery adventure

Between March and June, half a million Home inhabitants joined forces to solve a puzzle in an alternate reality game (ARG) called Xi. It originated in PS3's virtual community, but reached out into the real world with players joining forces to scour websites and venture outside to find clues. The first was found on a USB stick taped to the underside of a bench on Hampstead Heath, and the ultimate aim was to find a character called Jess, a Home beta-tester who'd disappeared. Finding the missing girl involved challenges including searching out 24 scraps of paper known as Fragments and tracking down 20 Butterflies through bonus side missions. This is how it all unfolded.



19 Feb First clues

A month after videos reveal a futuristic new Home location, a manhole cover and Xi graffiti (hiding a teleporter) appear in the virtual world. When the teleporter starts it opens up Xi's operation base – the Hub – and introduces a group of beta testers called the AlphaAFK. Xi has begun, and we're cynical yet curious.

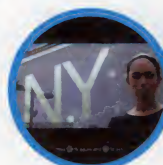
23 Mar Finding three bits of paper in the Hub and solving a puzzle earns our first Fragment. Yay! Ahem.

23 Mar We get our first Butterfly after correctly uncovering Jess's fave album, The Automatic's Not Accepted Anywhere.

30 Mar Fragment 3 is earned by completing three mini-games in the new Alpha Zone 1.

26 Mar Code cracked

Having completed a picture puzzle at bigbenuk.com for another Fragment, the Hub's resident robot, Stapler, finds a file on jess247.com that contains HTML ASCII. Correctly translating it to 'Vanessa Atlanta' earns a Butterfly. We're now hooked.



1 Apr EU collective

A vid shows Jess standing outside a 'NY' billboard in London. She's hidden clues there and in other European locations including Munich, Milan and, um, Birmingham. Forum users quickly find and collate the clues and are rewarded with Butterfly 3.

2 Apr Driving game Maximum Tilt opens. Scoring 25,000 points earns an easy Fragment.



3 Apr Sat nav solving

The first real test: a challenge at alphaaafk.net involving the GPS coordinates of previous G8 summits. They're clues that lead to the code 'La Maddalena' – a proposed 2009 G8 location – which earns Butterfly 4. Later, finishing a Dungeons & Dragons-style adventure earns Fragment 5.

8 Apr Five Butterflies! Whoop! This one comes as a result of completing all games in Alpha Zone 1 on expert difficulty.

24 Apr Tastes fishy

After completing a puzzle involving decoding music on a T-shirt (it's the score to Strauss's Blue Danube) to earn a Butterfly, Alpha Zone 2 opens. Inside are two aquariums – one good, one evil. To earn a Fragment you play as a fish, collecting food pellets and avoiding the evil fish. It's easy, but funny.

23 Apr A piece of paper found on a revolving poster at the theatre holds the code for Fragment 10.

16 Apr Heavy metal

Yes! Robot building! The best bit of Xi so far. Create three cyborgs within a time limit and get a Fragment, then complete a sliding tile puzzle for another. Double win! Followed by a tantrum at not being allowed to keep our mech friends.

22 Apr Alphaaafk.net lists airport codes that, when connected, produce a code to unlock Butterfly 8.

13 Apr Going underground

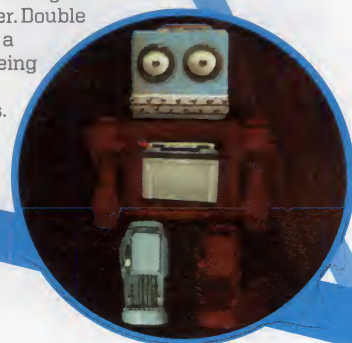
Accessing a maintenance area through a manhole in Home Square, then registering a new ID into a computer terminal, earns the seventh Fragment.



15 Apr Kanji symbols on a maintenance area locker reveal a colour sequence that unlocks Butterfly 7.

9 Apr Star quality

A new Fragment (and an in-Home T-shirt) is earned by working out the age of Jess's pal Miguel from his online blog and entering it into the Hub's Holopad. Random letters on clock faces in Alpha Zone 1 are rearranged into the name of a star, 'Beta Centauri', for another Butterfly.



29 Apr Going Parisien

Time to rely on the French, after a video appears of Jess in Paris. Locals trawl the capital for clues that spell out the web address 3P424187.com - a new Xi site - and another Butterfly code. Basically, it's lots of work for little reward.



1 May A new video with fast-moving text reveals the words 'Au Revoir' - the code for another Butterfly.



1 May Threatening comms

Things get weird as players receive a message reading: "Xi is private property. Desist from pursuing it immediately." Shortly after, new website veilcorp.com offers *real* job applications. Completing three Alpha Zone 2 challenges serves up Fragment 13.

30 Apr Previously dead screens in Alpha Zone 2 activate with two puzzles based on electrical circuits. Completion earns Fragment 12.

11 May Jess's place

A likeable pipe puzzle, 'inspired' (cough) by Bioshock's hacking mini-game, is the path to Fragment 15. In bigger news, there's a party at Jess's in-Home apartment! Peering out over the balcony reveals a ship called Capulet, the code for another Fragment. But hang on, there are a lot of blokes at this party...



13 May Working out the order in which members joined the AlphaAFK, then spelling out the first letter of each of their names, earns the thirteenth Butterfly.

14 May Solving a complicated puzzle involving a music video, stencil and a flyer produces the code for Butterfly 14.

7 May Bored silence

It's been a week since all Xi players received the aggressive message, but there's been no follow up. Instead, just a lazy puzzle: sorting through pictures on jess247.com to find four numbers that make the code to nab another Fragment. Hmmm.



18 May The morning after

Party's over. Still no pretty girls. Except us - OPM has turned itself into an attractive, slim woman. Coo-ee! Inside the empty flat graffiti spells out the word 'Einstein' - the code for Fragment 17. Still no word on the Veilcorp stuff, but it feels like we have to bloody-mindedly see this through to a conclusion now.



19 May First lady

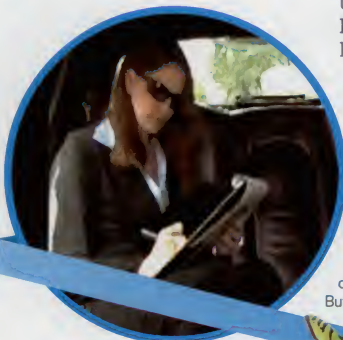
An email sent to all Xi-ers claims that veilcorp.com hides a goddess. Scouting the site reveals that her name is Diana - which, handily, is also the password to earn the eighteenth Fragment.

19 May Veilcorp's USB hosts a video with a password for veilcorp.com - and for a Butterfly. That's 15.



18 May NY visit

Veilcorp is awake! Successful job applicants are invited to a real New York job interview in a limo. Those who attend receive USB drives containing documents key to Xi. After two months, it feels like a conclusion is near.



22 May Xi goes LPB

Jess has been on LittleBigPlanet! Okay, that's a cool piece of cross-promotion. A level called Papillon Alpha (go play it, it's fun) offers a Xi sticker and a code for Butterfly 16. Three days later, the opening of Alpha Zone 3 comes with a Teamwork Maze full of gates and switches. Working with other Xi-ers, we finish it to earn a Fragment.



28 May Butterfly 17 is earned by using Google Maps's Street View to locate letters in a number of Australian streets.

29 May India calling

A flurry of activity. First, Alpha Zone 3's Ghost Maze opens, and we win a Fragment by evading spectral skulls. Then the Riddle Maze opens, awarding another Fragment for completing puzzles. Then an ad in Time Out Mumbai (!) directs people to the Royal Exchange Buildings in London, where a Xi crossword is found. hilariously... no one can solve it!



5 Jun A simple puzzle, matching symbols to colours, generates the code for Fragment 22.

5 Jun Another maze opens in Alpha Zone 3, combining elements of the others, with a new Butterfly on offer.



9 Jun After earning the final Butterfly by adding up a series of Egyptian numbers, Jess emails to say that they've been 'transformed'. Riiiight.

6 Jun On the scavenger

The crossword is solved! It leads to an image that appears differently on a monitor, when printed or seen on a PS3 browser. All three are needed to find a Butterfly code. Two days later, a scavenger hunt makes players count objects in Home to earn a Fragment.

10 Jun The end

A Hub door opens revealing a monolith bearing a binary number puzzle, which we solve for the final Fragment. Players can release or destroy Xi, which turns out to be a virus. Either way, Jess says she'll 'be in touch' - it's an open-ended, underwhelming, finale.



Candidate file summary for teamopm

Fragments collected:	24
Butterflies collected:	20
Days taken part:	41
Current faction:	No faction joined.
Personality type:	PERFECTIONIST



PS
056

the rules of a t t r a c t i o n

Serial murder, drug addiction and sexy dancing... Will you stay alive long enough to see everything that the sinister world of **Heavy Rain** has to offer?



The Last Seduction

Sudden death and erotic dance in the murky world of Heavy Rain

Playing Heavy Rain, a strange thing becomes clear. Doing nothing is a choice. Hesitate too long at a crucial point and the characters won't just stand there performing a cutesy idle animation. They'll miss vital opportunities, offend the person they're talking to, or in our case, die mangled in a car crusher.

From the shots alone it's obvious this isn't an ordinary game. Its part multiple-choice quiz, part interactive film, all mo-capped and voiced to uncanny valley-defying perfection by proper actors. The control system is as unique as the visuals. Think of it like a super-advanced type of quick-time events, with smartly designed button presses, stick movements and Sixaxis waggles used to reflect the action on-screen.

For this playtest we wanted to explore how deep the idea of choice actually runs. There are over 60 'scenes' in Heavy Rain, and failing these, or even letting one of the four main playable characters die, won't end the game – it'll just make it carry on along a different path. Everything you choose to do, or not do, affects the story. (The proof? We've dissected every possible choice in one scene on the next page.)

Pro-choice

"There are two ways consequences work within the game," explains Alex Pavey, SCEA product manager on Heavy Rain, as FBI agent Norman Jayden's car pulls up to a scrap yard. "You've got micro and macro consequences. Micro ones happen within the scene and branch off in different ways, and macro ones, where things you do in one scene affect a later one." And sometimes, the choice is an illusion.

Whether you head straight to the warehouse or wander over to Mad Jack, the yard's owner, both choices arrive at the same point – Jayden and Jack having a chat inside. But Pavey points out most players won't know that, because the game has taught them that any decision can be crucial. "The key thing to remember when you're seeing a scene like this and analysing it in isolation is that there's never any clear signposts as to which decisions are going to have dramatic consequences." For now, Jack is edgy and unhelpful, leaving Jayden to explore.

Searching for evidence in the warehouse provides an example of 'macro consequences'. When Jayden uses his Added Reality Interface glasses, holograms pop up showing trace evidence: fingerprints, flecks of blue paint and blood. It's a germaphobes nightmare.

The blood leads to an acid bath with a dark secret and an ultimately fight with Jack, but another clue, traces of orchid pollen in the air, is barely visible. It doesn't seem important, but spotting it has a significant effect on a later scene. Meanwhile, we've got more immediate problems with Jack. The fight is fast, frantic, and will feel familiar to anyone who's played a button-matching mini-game in a God Of War or a recent Resident Evil. Fail too often and you die. Win and you get a confession.

Sometimes it seems as though you have a

machine. Quick moves get you out, but the final fight with Jack can only end two ways. Either he dies, or Jayden does. But his death just tugs the plot in a different direction. "Having Jayden die at this point might be more interesting. You might respond to it better than if you had got through the game with all four characters"

Private dancer

We also got to see a scene starring Madison Paige (pictured) at the Blue Lagoon nightclub. This time, as well as demonstrating the depth

"In the lap dancing scene you're both voyeur and puppet master."



Meet Madison Paige, journalist and amateur stripper.

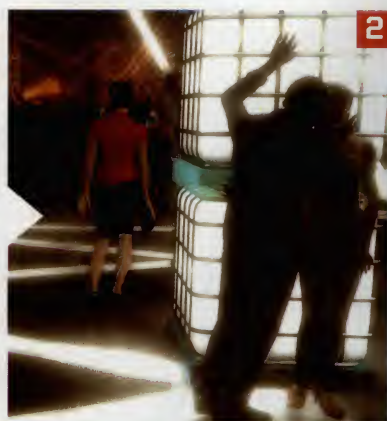
choice, but the game wants you to fail. When Jayden goes into withdrawal after fighting Jack (he's addicted to a drug called triptocaine that heightens his ARI abilities) the sequence of commands blurs and demands the impossible, like pressing all the buttons at once. Short of sprouting spare fingers, there's no way to do it, so Jayden is certain to pass out. But although nobody enjoys failure, the game is just doing its job. You're *supposed* to feel helpless. "That's something the game plays with," says Pavey. "Making you make decisions or actions that you can't succeed in." Here, your inevitable failure leaves you at Jack's mercy, trapped inside a car heading into the rusty maw of the crushing

of choice, it also highlighted the game's more adult themes. Paige needs information from sleazy nightclub owner Paco, so she finds a podium, and starts dancing. Paco is nearby, but she's not getting his attention. People constantly compare Heavy Rain to a film, but here it looks more like a glossy US TV show. You half expect Gil and the CSI team to barge in and start squirting Luminol around.

For Paige, it's time for a trip to the bathroom, and the application of some make-up, using the analogue stick to circle Paige's eyes with liner and shaking the Sixaxis to rip her skirt. It feels more playful, and the slower pace of the commands means it's less like your standard QTE sequence. Finally, Paco takes Paige up to his office. Pavey says, "Often in games when you've got the choice of doing the good or the bad option, that's very clearly signposted. The whole idea with Heavy Rain is that that's never the case." The striptease Paige starts performing next would almost certainly score you bad karma points. It's an uncomfortable scenario, you're both voyeur and puppet master. We didn't get to see every avenue in this scene, but we're fairly sure she does topless in one option, before taking her chance to grab a lamp and knock Paco out. That's when the mood changes, as Paige squeezes Paco's nuts to make him talk it's played for laughs, she even fakes an orgasm to send away a suspicious henchman. It's dark, sassy, and, yes, sexy in a way that few games even consider attempting. From the modern urban setting to the adult themes and innovative controls, Heavy Rain remains both PS3's riskiest, and most intriguing, exclusive.



1



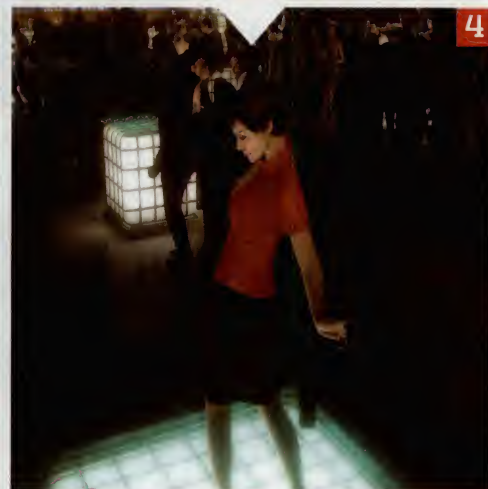
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6



4



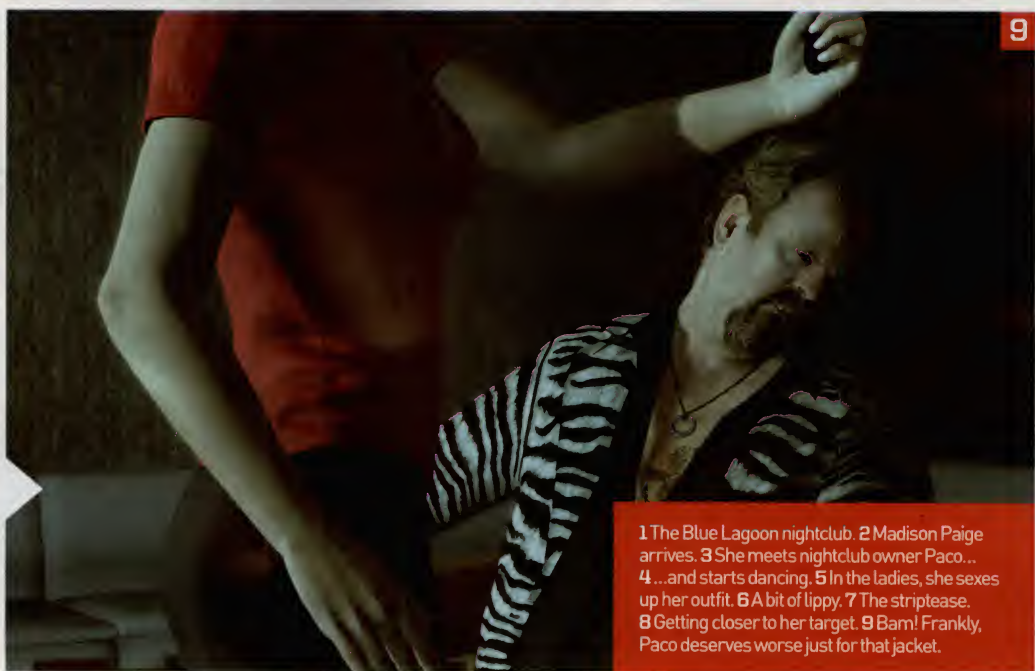
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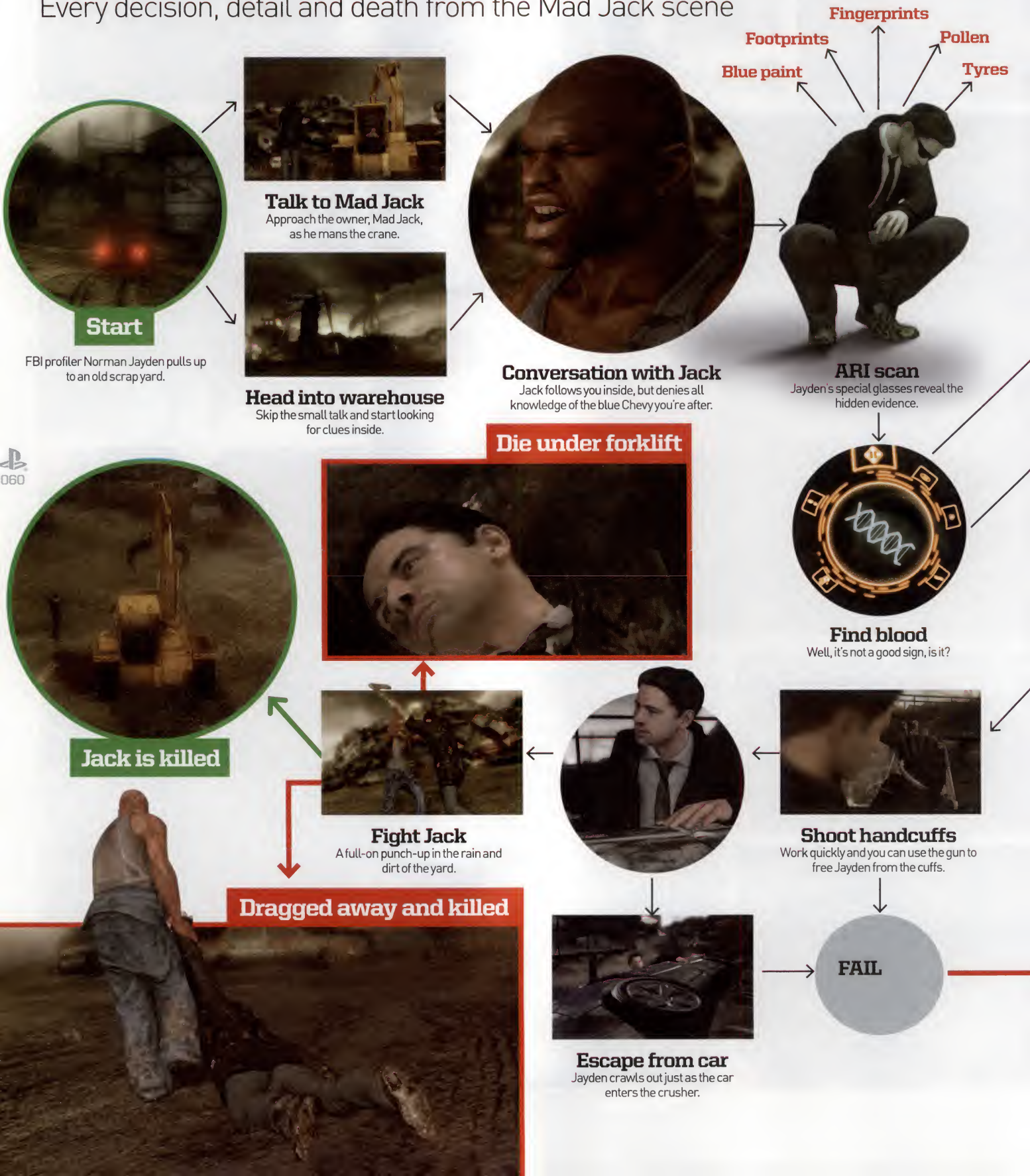


9

1 The Blue Lagoon nightclub. 2 Madison Paige arrives. 3 She meets nightclub owner Paco... 4 ...and starts dancing. 5 In the ladies, she sexes up her outfit. 6 A bit of lippy. 7 The striptease. 8 Getting closer to her target. 9 Bam! Frankly, Paco deserves worse just for that jacket.

Diagram of death

Every decision, detail and death from the Mad Jack scene





Find skull in the acid bath

The skull floating in the acid turns out to be a fellow officer who spent too much time poking around. Jack had to "solder his little mouth."



Die on car roof

FOLLOW
BLOOD
TRAIL



Armed Jack appears

Turns out he hates it when people snoop around his stuff.



Escape and fight

Use the equipment lying around the warehouse to fight back.

GET
THE
HANDGUN

Resist
Impress
Second chance
Hit

LEAVE
BUILDING



Killed by Jack

© PERSIST

Interrogate Jack

Here's a tip: Jack doesn't respond well to the softly softly approach.

POUR
GASOLINE
ON JACK

GET GUN
FROM
GLOVE
BOX



Car crusher

Jayden wakes inside a car, that's falling into a crushing machine.

JACK
ADMITS
GUILT

Withdrawal

As you try to arrest Jack, Jayden's addiction to triptocaine kicks in, and he falls to the floor in an unavoidable faint.

Die in crusher



L1





Interview

Quantic Dream CEO Guillaume de Fondaumière talks morals, sex and sequels

OPM You've been secretive so far...

Guillaume de Fondaumière It's not a level-based game. By showing one scene you're not presenting the game as it is; we have 68 scenes in the game, all of which have bespoke activities and gameplay. Also **Heavy Rain is an interactive experience that is based on emotion** – you really have to show a scene that's completely finished. It needs to have the right voiceover, the right animations, the graphical resources need to be at a certain level before people really understand what the experience is, so we needed to have finalised scenes in order to show the game.

OPM How much freedom will there be? Will you be able to randomly attack characters?

GDF Heavy Rain is story-driven and we'd like to give players the opportunity to tell their own story. It's a little bit like in real-life. It wouldn't make sense for me to just stand up and slap you. We wanted to stay in control, to tell a story that's consistent. Within the story the player does have a certain amount of freedom, to decide whether to engage in a relationship; where you investigate, or not, a certain path; whether you want, or not, to say something to someone. That's a large amount of choices. Some choices have consequences on a local level, within the same scene – for example, you might decide to engage in conversation, and to push it in a certain direction toward information. Some actions may have consequences three or four scenes later, and some of those are radical. For instance, losing a character for good. This has a dramatic impact on the story.

OPM Will players be able to make the connections between past actions and their current consequences?

GDF Of course, and not only to give choice, but also for people to understand what these choices are, especially when there are moral choices. Part of our work is to make sure each consequence is understandable to the player. We want players to bear the consequences of their actions, to be aware and appreciate that there are consequences.

OPM There's been some controversy about Madison's attempt to seduce Paco, and the implicit threat that she may face sexual assault. Are you prepared for controversy?

GDF We decided from the very beginning that we would create a mature experience, **we would be exploring themes and subject matters that are clearly aimed toward an adult audience.** We didn't want to shock audiences for the sake of shocking them. Everything is contextual, everything is within the story. We want to be responsible, we want to present a story which is mature, we want to discuss subjects that are meaningful, that offer depth, but we do not want to shock. So we're very careful about the shots we're using, the way that actions unfold...

To go back to the Madison scene, for instance. She's seducing Paco Mendez for a reason. She arrives at this disco, she's investigating a very serious case and she knows that she has to find a way to get a piece of information from this character. She's quite intrepid, she ventures into his office – obviously he's a very dangerous person, but eventually she'll find a way to get the information. She might be in a very difficult situation and I'd say the scene is about macho-ism. When we presented it [at E3], people laughed, they felt discomfort on one hand – this is exactly what we wanted. We're not advocating any form of assault

toward women – on the contrary, we're taking quite a firm stance on it. We wanted this scene to feel uncomfortable, because it is. It's a horrendous situation to be in for a woman – we wanted the audience to feel that. Of course, there is no way in Heavy Rain that women are mistreated. This is why we're in control, we don't want people to do just anything with this character...

OPM What do you think causes the moral backlash against games – is it the interactive element or is it just a generational thing?

GDF I think it has to do with the fact that there is a generation gap. People still don't understand that games are a form of cultural expression, like films and books. It also has a little to do with the industry, to a certain degree – **in the past 30 years we've been mostly focusing on creating experiences for 'grown-ups', not really for adults.** This means that today when creators are offering new experiences, which are venturing into other areas and confronting players with moral choices that are seen every day on TV, there's a reaction by certain groups of parents who say 'well, I don't want my children to see this'. And they shouldn't.

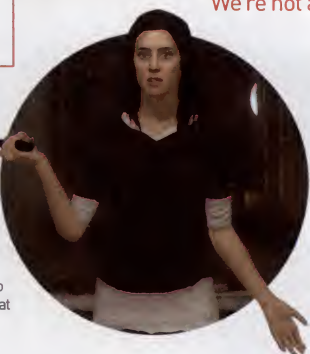
But we shouldn't restrict ourselves as creators, and continue to only produce games for 'grown-ups'. At Quantic, we really believe that games can be far more than toys. That you can tell stories that are meaningful, that venture into areas movies and books explore. There's no reason why videogames shouldn't.

OPM What are the predecessors of Heavy Rain and its interactive fiction? Shenmue?

GDF We didn't want to make a game that was too static – for us, the story is at the core of the experience. But it's a videogame we're

The audition

Some of the first footage released for Heavy Rain was a staggering tech demo in 2006. It showed an audition, with brunette Mary Smith, 24, talking straight to camera. After a few questions from an invisible director, it cuts to a monologue in a kitchen – Mary talking about a relationship turning sour, addressing an unfaithful lover in increasingly angry tones. Soon she's crying, waving a gun around, before pulling the trigger and ending the scene, where the action returns to the audition room. You can see it for yourself at snipurl.com/n81o8.



Adults only

Quantic Dream has never been one to shy from adult themes. In fact, it seems someone there may have watched too many murder mysteries as a child. Fahrenheit (also known as Indigo Prophecy) was a game Quantic Dream released for PS2 in 2005. It also featured murders, sex and insanity, but that didn't stop it getting a favourable critical reception, with Official PlayStation 2 Magazine scoring it 9/10.



Sex sells

Plenty of games feature sex, but de Fondaurnière has a point when he argues it's not always treated in an adult way. In the early days you could tip the strippers in Duke Nukem 3D, God Of War 2's sex mini-game saw the Spartan frolicking with two topless lovelies and most recently we've had the lap dancers in Grand Theft Auto IV. Pro tip: Pay for five dances and you'll get two girls for the price of one.



making – it needs to be interactive, you need to be in control, to be able to interact with as many objects, characters and environments as possible. So we created a new language.

You mentioned Shenmue because of the QTEs we're using in Heavy Rain...

I think we've brought this concept to a totally new level. In Heavy Rain, they are highly interactive – it's not a fail or success mechanism, it's far more complex. It really gives you the possibility to interact with the action throughout the game, and gives us the possibility as creators to offer highly cinematic action sequences – it could be shooting, it could be driving, it could be fighting. We can do almost anything with our QTEs, which by the way we call PAR – physical action, reaction...

OPM What's one of your favourite PARs?

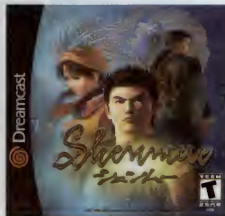
GDF I think people are going to be extremely surprised when they see the whole game, to see how diverse the actions are. From the two scenes we've shown, you can see we offer exploration, dialogue, interaction. We offer highly cinematic action sequences – in the Mad Jack scene, for instance, we used QTEs for fighting, in the Madison at the Blue Lagoon scene, we use them for dancing. It's a new language, a new grammar of gaming. It's up to us as creators to make the best out of it and offer a diversity of interaction possibilities. No scene is like another in this game – each offers bespoke interactivity, and I think it's the sum of all the scenes, of all the interactions, that makes it unique.

OPM Will we need to be able to read the facial expressions of characters?

GDF Of course. **We've worked with actors for a year and a half on this project** and we

Button up

Shenmue is the game often credited with the first quick-time, or button-pressing, events. Released for the Dreamcast way back in 1999, it was an adventure game that featured Chinese gangs, martial arts and revenge. But QTE events actually started with a Sega Saturn game, Die Hard Arcade, in 1996. Despite the name and the licence, the game had only vague connections with the film, it had been in production previously as a standalone title. It featured the hero fighting to save the president's daughter from terrorists.



really asked them to be their characters and to perform as though they were in a movie. So they're really in their roles and what you see on screen is this performance captured as faithfully as possible. A particular character at a particular moment has a certain expression that leads you to believe something about what he's going to do next, or whether he tells the truth or not. You're going to see it because we're faithfully reproducing his expressions.

OPM How will Heavy Rain be able to attract a wider audience?

GDF First of all, the themes of the game are very different. It's not a game about fighting, driving or shooting – we believe that most people aren't necessarily attracted to those kinds of experiences. We want to say to people, 'Do you like movies? Do you like thrillers? This game is for you. Do you like good stories? This game is for you'. We want to put the challenge not in the controller, but in the head of the players, which means we need to have a control system that's as intuitive as possible but nevertheless gives you the possibility to experience something strong, while interacting all the time. This is why we created this new gameplay mechanic, which we believe will be accessible to a wider audience.

OPM Does Heavy Rain make moral judgements about the player? Will it be possible to make poor moral decisions, but still finish with a 'happy' ending?

GDF Of course, it's a question of choice. We're trying to establish a language of gaming where nothing is right or wrong, it's just about choices. Heavy Rain is not a game where you can be either the really bad guy or



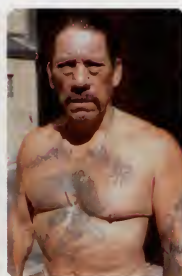
the really good guy, we're trying to be a bit more subtle. We think that all our characters carry the possibility of doing good and bad things – it's a bit like in real life – what would you do if you were confronted with this issue? We're putting players into the shoes of the protagonists to see how they react – and for us that is far more important than seeing if I am the good or the bad guy.

OPM Is there any possibility for emergent behaviours? Is there any way you could be surprised by what individual gamers do?

GDF No. But we are starting to work on emergent story-telling and emergent behaviours, so in the future you might see games from Quantic that use this technology. But it's a bit early to be able to create these kinds of experience, especially because **story-driven experiences like Heavy Rain have a core story that is very strong** – and we want to stay in control of it from the beginning to the end.

OPM Do you see this game as a one-off, or is there the possibility of sequels or spin-offs? Will certain narrative threads be left open?

GDF The story of Heavy Rain will close. Like a movie, we have created an experience with a sense of closure. There are many different endings in this game, obviously, since your actions carry consequences, but each ending has a real sense of closure. We wanted to offer an experience where people didn't think, 'Okay, I'm losing something, I'm missing the end of something', which is, of course, frustrating. But there are ways for us to continue Heavy Rain, if not the main story, then to develop side-stories, especially for the four main characters. We have no plans yet, but it's possible.



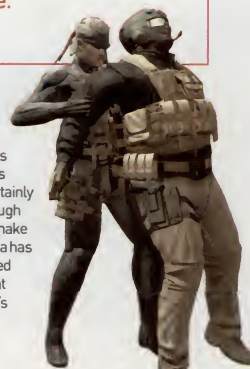
Casting call

Four main characters have been revealed for Heavy Rain. Ethan Mars, Scott Shelby, Madison Paige and Norman Jayden. Each character has been carefully motion-captured by a specific actor or actress. Jayden, for example, is played by an English actor called Leon Ockenden (far left). The same actor has been used for the voice and the movements, to ensure the scenes feel as authentic as any film. Paco's bodyguard was also modelled on Mexican actor Danny Trejo (left) star of vampire movie From Dusk Till Dawn and the currently-in-production action flick, Machete.



Meeting Mr Metal Gear

Quantic Dream's David Cage met with Metal Gear Solid auteur Hideo Kojima at the Leipzig Games Convention. Their meeting was behind closed doors, but Cage has revealed they have different ideas when it comes to narrative. "I certainly respect his work, definitely, although it's not the type of game I want to make myself." It's not the first time Kojima has met with fellow developers. He visited Ubisoft for Assassin's Creed and spent some time with DICE, creators of Mirror's Edge, last year.





2 Multiplayer

Playing co-op is the biggest offline draw for FIFA, thanks to the official licences. But the real draw is online, which offers an exhaustive range of game types (player-created leagues, huge ten-on-ten matches) and servers that keep the game flowing. The card-collecting Ultimate Team DLC adds a reason to keep coming back, too.

▲ FIFA's new(ish) career mode Be A Pro has changed the way football's played online.

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1 Gameplay

FIFA plays a totally brilliant game in the first two thirds of the pitch. The keeper distributes the ball quickly and cleanly, the passing is fluid and the AI running makes for some really satisfying build-up play. Attacking is less polished – it's still hard to beat defenders one-on-one, crossing is ineffective and it's hard to score from outside the box – but the underlying engine is definitely stronger than Konami's. And with its Be A Pro career, FIFA's come up with a new way to play footy games that challenges Master League for moreishness.



▲ Barcelona is one of the few licensed clubs in both FIFA and PES, thanks to Konami's new Champions League deal.



◀ We guess EA signed a long deal with Ronny, because he's rubbs now.

FIFA 09

Ten months on, how do the big-money footy games shape up?

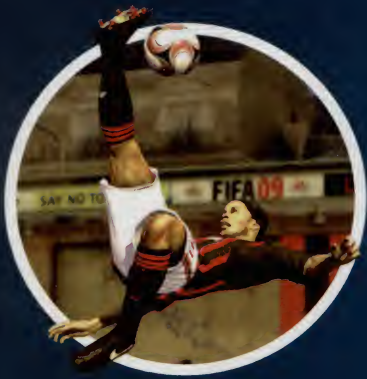


► Robbie Keane, presumably about to not score for Poolers.

1 Gameplay

This is the game that dominated FIFA on PS2. The magic of a perfect through ball or reverse pass is still there, but it's an old engine, and with invisible forcefields, players on automatic running tracks, and pan-handed goalies, it's beginning to clunk. The ace up the sleeve is Master League, which remains a strong, addictive timesink.





3 Presentation

Still a strong point. The game looks good from the grandstanding one-on-one arena opener onwards, and commentary from Sky's team of Martin Tyler and Andy Gray is lively and accurate. The only sore point is the menu system, which is a tortuous maze of online lobbies and modes. It's all very well reinventing the wheel when it comes to online play, but it's useless if nobody can figure out how to actually play the thing.

4 Realism

The licences give FIFA the edge - it's dripping with officialness. The overhauled engine makes the game *feel* realistic - the ball comes off players' boots at the right angle, and contact is authentically muscular. The occasional impossible trap and keeper forcefield means it's not perfect, but in terms of feeling like football, FIFA's your only man.



✓ England's chaviest strip of all time was a downloadable update.



4 Realism

PES still can't compete with FIFA's comprehensive licences, although the Champions League tie-in is a smart addition. More damaging to the authentic match atmosphere, though, is the game's 2D cardboard-cutout crowd and their mindless chanting, which make it feel like you're playing in front of an elaborately constructed robot crowd in some twisted dystopian future. And while PES has traditionally been cast as the more authentic football sim, as FIFA evolves, it looks further and further off the pace.

3 Presentation

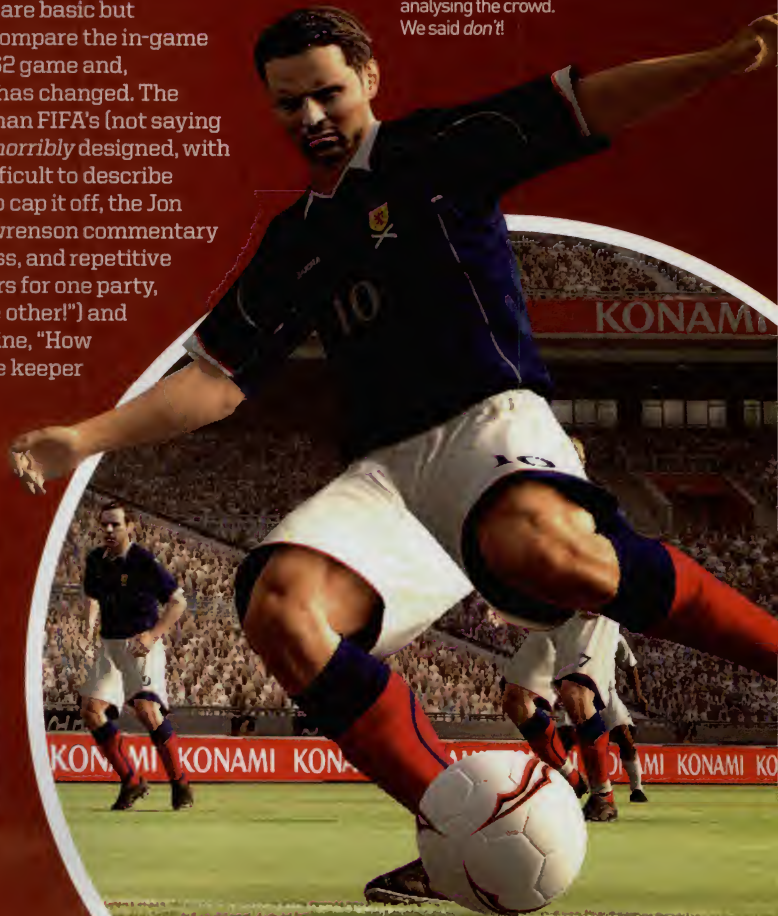
The graphics are basic but functional - compare the in-game screens to the old PS2 game and, shockingly, not a lot has changed. The menus are simpler than FIFA's (not saying a whole lot), but are *horribly* designed, with music that's very difficult to describe without swearing. To cap it off, the Jon Champion/Mark Lawrenson commentary pairing is trite, lifeless, and repetitive ("This will end in tears for one party, and in a party for the other!") and missing the crucial line, "How the good cock did the keeper not hold that?"

2 Multiplayer

Massive highs and lows. Nothing else can match the ferocious replayability of PES' two-on-two games - despite, and quite probably because of the frequent, outrageous injustices, it's insanely compelling, and still the OPM office lunchtime game of choice. Weirdly, though, any more than four players stretches the engine to breaking point (miscontrols, crazy player selection), and online the whole game is a shambles.



▲ Beckham hits a free kick! And is then mysteriously paralysed for a few seconds. What?



feature

Team Ico

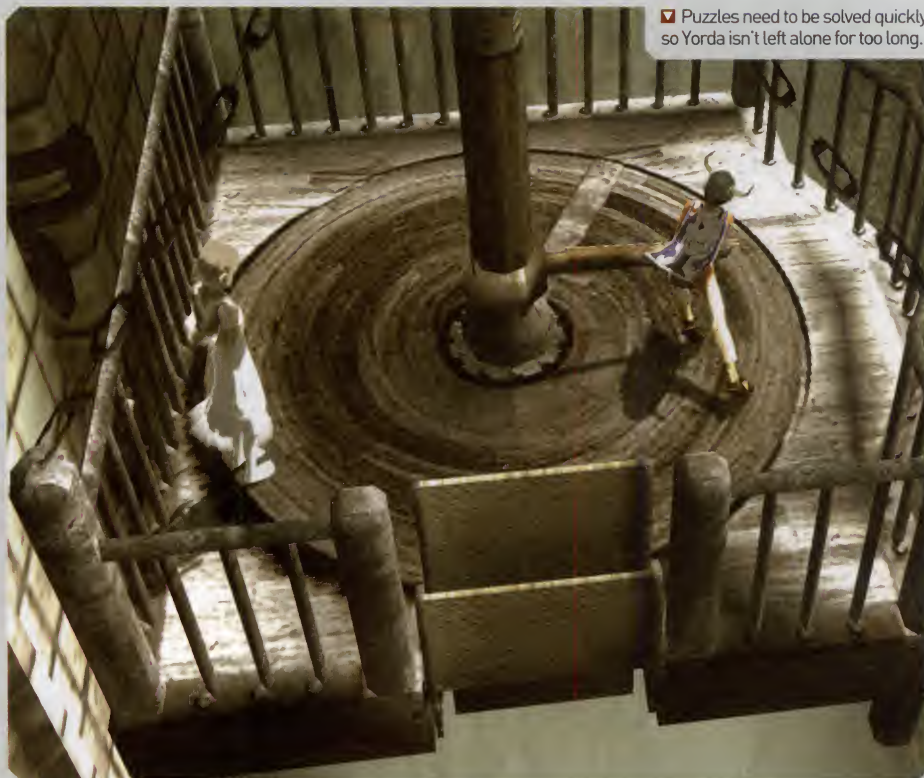
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Standing on the shoulders of giants



Fumito Ueda's Ico and Shadow Of The Colossus have earned their status as PlayStation classics. But how did they become so revered, and what do they tell us about his next game The Last Guardian? Read on... ►



Take adventure by the hand and grip it tight

Games really can do emotion – breathless, heartfelt and aching. And it's got nothing to do with expensive motion capture or cutting edge facial animation. Japanese genius Fumito Ueda and his team proved as much back in 2001 with PS2 game Ico: a spellbinding adventure that weaved together bold design, thoughtful storytelling, and lush imagery like no game before it.

Fairytale princess

Once you set eyes on your companion Yorda, you'll understand why. Initially a prisoner,

she's fragile without being needy, caring but never overly sentimental. In unsettling surroundings filled with monsters, she's the only source of companionship in one of the loneliest games you'll ever play. You'll love

The biggest threat are the eerie, shapeless smoke monsters that appear and try to drag Yorda into inky black portals. They usually attack when you have to leave her to investigate the castle's puzzles, and her

"She'll have your heart in your mouth the whole way."

and care for her like an overprotective parent; in return she'll have your heart in your mouth the whole way through.

You're Ico, a young boy imprisoned in an oppressive, empty castle by his fellow villagers for being born with horns. You find Yorda early on, locked in a cage. Why isn't initially clear, but once she is released, leading her to safety is all you think about as you try to escape the strange, towering walls.

desperate, distant cries for help as you race back to save her feel like ice being pumped through every last vein in your body.

Falling for her

The castle's tall spires are also riddled with perilous jumps – distances that are often too far for Yorda to leap. Each and every time you catch her hand as she falls, you feel terrified and exhilarated. It's this bond of responsibility



Dev talk

"The game is not about antithesis. I think the desire for destruction is [a] human instinct. At the same time, it is in our instinct to protect something or someone, as Ico does in the game. I don't think one instinct is good and the other is bad."

Fumito Ueda, director

Yorda often wanders off, leaving you calling fearfully to find her.



Holding hands enables you to lead your companion to new areas and away from the monsters pursuing her.



Your prison, a massive mountain-top castle, is a bleak and lonely place.



Ico's distinctive art style still looks lovely, even eight years after release.

Defining moments Ico's most memorable events



1

First contact

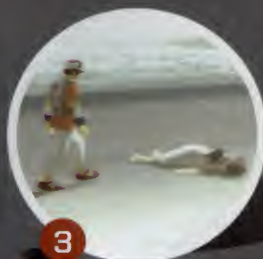
After escaping a tomb you soon discover Yorda, a mysterious and frail waif, locked in a cage.



2

Getting the sword

Initially your only weapon is a wooden plank. It's a relief, then, when you eventually find a blade.



3

The beach finale

Creator Ueda is deliberately coy about the dream-like conclusion. Does Yorda really survive?

and worry that keeps you hooked. Yorda is helpless without you to protect her, while you need her to open mystic doors with her unexplained powers. The disarming nature created through this relationship of mutual dependence is massively affecting.

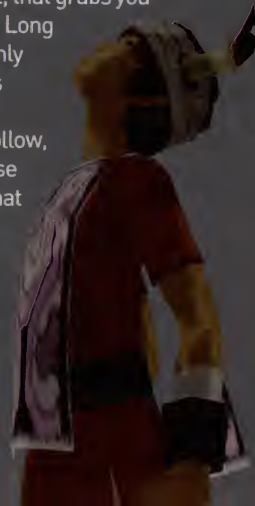
Thank God the relationship is compelling, the atmosphere slow-burning and evocative,

because Ico isn't frustration free. Sluggish controls are the main issue – next to platformers like Prince Of Persia, Ico can feel imprecise and clumsy. But then this isn't about dexterity: it's a moody, pensive, often meditative story about a strange friendship.

A familiar theme to Team Ico's games is that a lot is left open to interpretation. The

baddie, a Cruella de Vil-esque witch, is a looming but understated force. The oily black creatures who try to kidnap Yorda at every turn are never explained. The final scene on a sun-scorched beach is a deliberately vague ending that refuses to provide a final answer.

With a simple, drained colour scheme and 'less is more' art style, Ico is gorgeous – but it's the sound, or lack of it, that grabs you more than anything else. Long periods of near silence only broken by Ico and Yorda's distressed calls to one another rising above a hollow, whistling wind. It's in these quiet, fragile moments that the game shines. Subtle and understated in an industry full of brash hyperbole – once you enter Ico's world, you'll never want to leave. ►





✓ Your opponents might seem huge but they all have fatal weak spots.

✓ Each beast is a walking puzzle that must be climbed and 'solved' (killed).



✓ Your horse, Agro, is more than a four-legged companion. He's vital to getting around the game's huge, open plains.



Shadow Of The

Marvel at giants... then murder them. Horribly

At its heart, this is a game about love. And like most good love stories, it's all for a girl. But unlike most good love stories, the girl in question is dead like a Friday night mass. This is where tortured hero Wander steps in: driven to a forbidden land, determined to find a cure for his deceased love, no matter what the consequences.

At his destination – a massive temple in the heart of the barren landscape – he makes a pact with a mysterious disembodied voice to resurrect her. The voice doesn't want that much, really. All Wander has to do is

travel into the desolate wastes on his horse, Agro, then seek out and murder 16 usually-building-sized creatures called colossi. Throughout this, your steed is a solitary, vigilant friend. Constantly by your

a medium filled with heavy-handed scripts. It's a completely stripped-down, undiluted experience. No side quests, no tacked-on, space-filling missions. Just 16 boss fights and the journey to find each one. Simply point

"Just 16 boss fights and the journey to find each one."

side no matter what lies before you, you think of him as a loyal companion, rather than a car with hooves.

your sword skywards and follow a beam of reflected light to each creature.

Part platformer, part puzzle game, it's filled with a poignant, disquieting atmosphere. The basic gameplay behind each battle with the colossi can be broken down easily. Find a way to climb onto it via a passing leg or matted flap of fur and then clamber between the tangled coat and strange architectural outcrops to find its



Dev talk

"With Ico, we gained some experience with how puzzles work. We took those puzzles and made them move. We made puzzles which live and die. We transformed those puzzles into something bigger than life and the player himself."

Fumito Ueda, director

Lonely planet

Aside from Agro, Wander has little meaningful contact throughout the game. There's no exposition and little context or dialogue to help explain your actions, giving the game a refreshing mystique in



❑ Wander's mysterious quest is to save Mono, a beautiful girl apparently sacrificed because her destiny was cursed.

Colossus

PS
071

Defining moments SOTC's most memorable events



1

Jumping the 13th colossus
Leaping to a flying titan's wing as the music reaches a crescendo. 'Epic' doesn't do it justice.



2

Gradual corruption
As Wander kills the colossi he's consumed by evil forces. A chilling insight into a hero's downfall.



3

Agro's fall
When your horse throws you to prevent you falling off a crumbling bridge with him it's heartbreaking.

weak spot – a mysterious glowing emblem – where it can be stabbed and killed.

Death in games is usually a compassionless, mechanical process. Years of mowing down OAPs in GTA or slitting throats as Solid Snake has left gamers' hearts hard like reinforced titanium. But this is different. It soon becomes clear that

the massive creatures might not be the real monsters. It could be you. As you progress, the slow, maudlin beasts appear increasingly less dangerous and more like harmless, roaming giants.

It resonates hugely because so much is left to your imagination. Wander is just a faceless lump to imprint your own personality onto

as you start to question your actions. Are you doing the right thing? As doubt settles in, the scale, solitude and constant presence of death continually grows – both from the slaughtered beasts and the constant return to the side of your still, pale beloved. As you push further into the sparse surroundings filled with misty swamps, humbling caverns and ruined cities, the bleak hopeless isolation of the flawed hero is overpowering.

Ultimately the game makes you reflect on, and even regret, your actions. It's a big achievement in a medium where moral choices often carry no real consequence. As a spiritual prequel to Ico, it also ties together a tragic, touching mythology with a conclusion that sees Ico's horned hero birthed from the actions of a man who destroys himself for love and curses generations in the process. Brave, bold and uniquely engaging, this leaves a lasting impression as massive as any of its wandering giants. ►



1

Valus

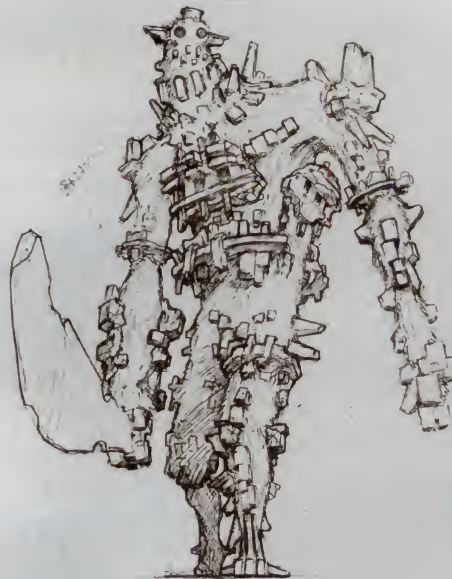
The first colossus is humanoid, designed to help us identify with it.



2

Quadratus

Weak spots hidden in this beast's feet developed the puzzle-solving elements.



3

Galus

One of the most spectacular colossi, who stands several hundred feet tall.



4

Phaedra

Designed to attack with stabbing feet, Phaedra is covered in easy-to-climb fur.



5

Avion

The smaller of the two flying colossi is a fast-moving, hugely exciting kill.



6

Barba

The bearded giant's prominent whiskers are his ultimate downfall.



7

Hydrus

This slithery aquatic beast has you 'climbing' him underwater.



8

Kuromori

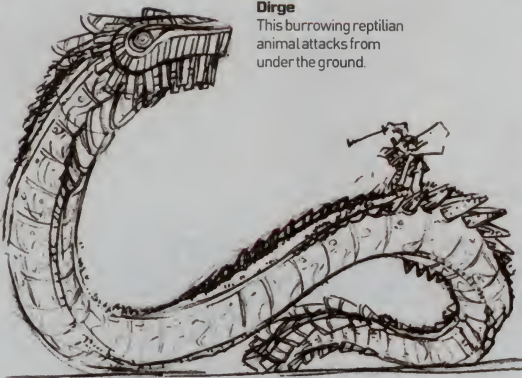
This scuttling lizard must be knocked from the walls he climbs to defeat him.



9

Basaran

A turtle-like foe that needs to be flipped over to kill.



10

Dirge

This burrowing reptilian animal attacks from under the ground.



13

Phalanx

This is a massive airborne snake that flies around an empty desert.

14

Cenobia

A small armoured colossus whose protective plates must be removed.



15

Argus

An angry, knife-wielding giant who wrecks buildings.



11

Celosia

This elephant-sized colossus has a fatal fear of fire.



12

Pelagia

This huge quadruped patrols a lake around some ruins.



16

Malus

The only stationary enemy. Malus is simply a huge tower with arms.

Art works

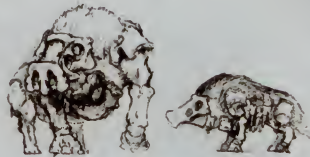
Team Ico's games would be nothing without their distinctive designs



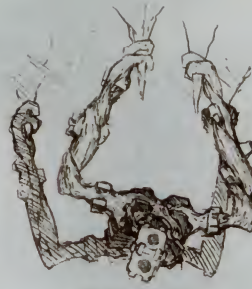
The B-team Not every colossus made the cut. Here are some you won't find in the game



▲ The bird man
Small and humanoid, this creature is a dull, generic enemy.



▲ The dead cow
Lacking distinctive sculpted growths, this looks like a furry skeleton.

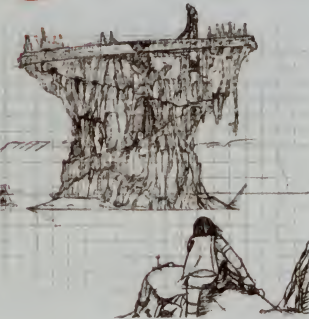


▲ Spider thing
This upside down creature would have been an interesting opponent.

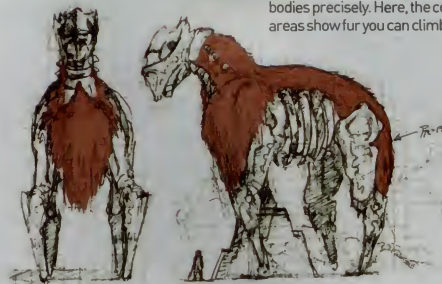
▶ The cute one
This spherical creation feels distinctly un-threatening.



Planning ahead Making both the world and creatures believable

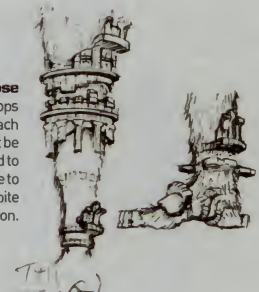


▶ Storyboards
Much of the environment is barren, so key areas, like the plinth on which you face Gaius, are dramatic and significant discoveries. This storyboard concept shows the hero's initial approach.



▶ Hair raising
Designing the colossi as 'moving puzzles' means mapping out their bodies precisely. Here, the coloured areas show fur you can climb on.

▶ Footloose
The stoney outcrops growing out of each creature must be carefully designed to make sense to the player, despite their odd location.



1

A surreal feel
Ico's box art is a bit weird, and often wins 'worst cover ever' awards. Could this be why the game didn't sell well? It's actually inspired by *The Nostalgia Of The Infinite*, a painting by metaphysical artist Giorgio de Chirico.



2

A thousand words
This is artwork from *Ico: Castle In The Mist*, a novel written by Japanese author Miyabe Miyuki. It expands on the characters and backstory but is considered non-canon to the game. It's also unfortunately never been translated into English.



Ico
In a game with no words, the art says it all



3

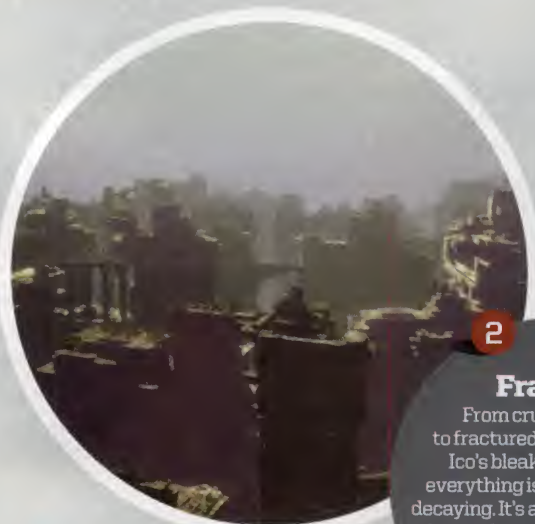
Blade runner
The windmill is an iconic image: an early puzzle where Ico has to cling on to the fan blades to reach the top. Getting the look right early on was crucial to convey the high walls and open spaces in the castle.



1

Obsession

In SOTC, all that matters to Wander is resurrecting his beloved. In Ico, the evil queen's quest for immortality consumes her. Can we expect the creature's persecution in The Last Guardian to be driven by similar compulsive needs?



2

Fragility

From crumbling walls to fractured bridges, in Team Ico's bleak environments everything is falling apart and decaying. It's a constant reminder that nothing really lasts forever - not your beliefs, not your friends, and certainly not you.

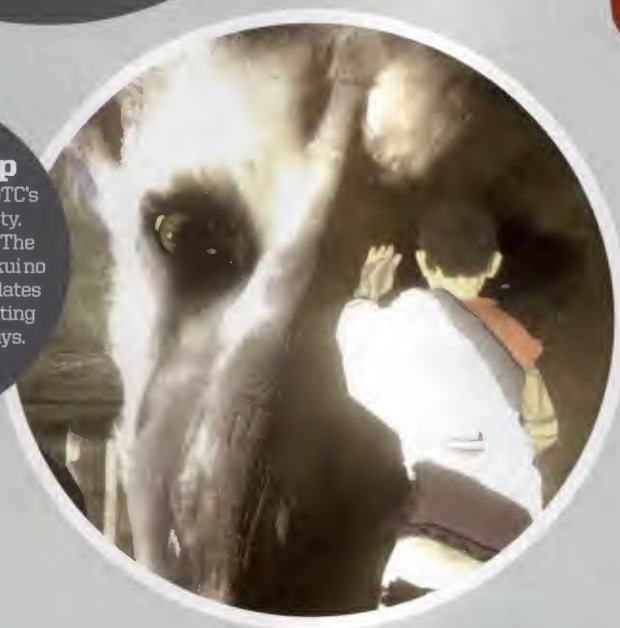
Recurring themes

How have the previous games influenced The Last Guardian? "We thought we could take the relationship built with Agro [your horse] in SOTC and make that the main focus," says director Ueda. Like in Ico, the two main characters are dependent. "You feed the 'eagle', and take out spears stuck in his body," says Ueda. Ico and SOTC are a good place to find out more...

3

Companionship

Without a friend, Ico and SOTC's landscapes would be empty. Expect the 'eagle' (in Japan The Last Guardian is called 'Hitokui no Oowashi Trico', which translates as 'Trico: The Giant Man-eating Eagle') to be with you always. Again, it's friendship without words.



The Last

What Ico and Shadow Of The Colossus tell us about the new game



4

Exploration

The thrill of discovering new places is a constant driving force for Ueda. The sprawling parapets here offer huge areas to investigate, while the different scale of the characters introduces interesting variety to the platforming.



5

Courage

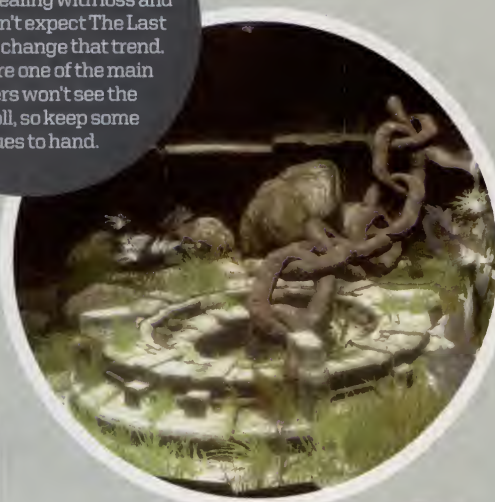
Both Ico and SOTC have involved unlikely heroes facing up to impossible odds. The force of will overcoming everything is a constant theme throughout. This time it's no different, with a small defenceless boy and a large but fluffy creature as the stars.



6

Death

Both Team Ico's previous games have involved characters dealing with loss and sacrifice. Don't expect The Last Guardian to change that trend. Chances are one of the main characters won't see the credits roll, so keep some tissues to hand.



7

Dependence

Both of Team Ico's previous stories were built on the co-dependency of its characters. You can expect a similar relationship here as you feed the creature and treat its wounds. In return it can attack guards and carry you to unreachable areas.

8

Abandonment

Ico and Yorda are both unwanted and shunned by others. Wander loses the girl he loves. In The Last Guardian both the new hero and the creature are apparently reviled and/or persecuted by a world that can't or won't understand them.



Who is Fumito Ueda?

In his own way, Ueda is as important as Hideki Kojima in helping to craft Sony's gaming legacy. His first break was as an animator, developing for the Sega Saturn. His narrative style then helped him convince Sony to make Ico with nothing more than a short CG movie. His skills are rooted in a respect for gameplay: "There should be game design first and a story that suits the design, not the other way around." He also has a respected desire to go against the grain. "If the market was full of games that had a minimalism, I'd probably create games with excessive decoration."

Guardian

feature

Driving special

Race for the prize

076

Why PS3 will soon be home to the greatest driving line-up ever

Racing games got boring. Squeezed between two giants – the perfectionist polish of Gran Turismo and the laddish mod-frenzy of Need For Speed – all the juice drained out of console driving. But things are changing. Absence has eased GT's uncompromising grip on the racing market, and EA's flashy street-burner isn't the force it once was. That leaves a space – one that several games are charging forward to fill. Not only are both NFS and GT staging major comebacks, but they're joined by a new generation of racers, each with their own unique take on what the

future of PlayStation racing holds. Blur and Split Second are all-out arcade battlers, while returning Codemasters efforts F1 2010 and Colin McRae Dirt 2 are making the licensed experience more thunderously immediate than ever. Fun comes courtesy of ModNation Racers and Sega's new Sonic karting game. And don't forget Burnout Paradise, Criterion's open-world giant which is changing the way we play online and still growing, 18 months after release. Racing hasn't been this charged or exciting for years – welcome to the future.





Info

Games in series 14
Year introduced 1994
First game Need For Speed Undercover
Last game Need For Speed Underground
Pub EA
Dev Slightly Mad Studios
ETA September 2009
Suitable for Arcade drivers who live for adrenaline but can handle proper racing.

Need For Speed Shift

The classic road racer reinvents itself

Overcooking Druids Corner at Brands Hatch has never felt so whiplash-inducingly close to reality. Whether you're after that classic arcade racer feel, or a more immersive driving experience, what we've seen so far of Need for Speed Shift looks like a refreshingly stern take on the flagging series' flamboyant driving style. The change is down to developer Slightly Mad, a new studio formed by members of the Simbim team behind recent classics GT Legends and GTR 2 – full on simulators with an incredible eye for detail.

And it's this realism that grabs you hard by the collar

"A stern take on the series' flamboyant style"

when you dive into Shift. The default in-car view uses motion blur and juddering cameras to make you feel every bump on the track, with G-forces smearing the visuals through tight corners, and making you feel like a drunk on a mechanical bull. Slide into a gravel trap or hit the wall at 120 and you're punished hard – colour drains from the screen and everything becomes a blurry grey mess as you struggle to regain control of the car.

Real racing

So far, so serious. But Slightly Mad is keen to stress that just because it's realistic, doesn't mean it's impossible to play. "People think that because it's a simulation, that means it's harder," says the studio's chief operations officer, Stephen Viljoen. "That's not true. Think about it: most of us drive cars, so you already have this real-world

experience. If you can't transfer this into the gameplay then there's something wrong with the physics of that game."

The message is that Slightly Mad hasn't abandoned the core of Need for Speed – it's just made it better. If the super realistic handling is too much, you can use slider-style tuners to tone it down. If you choose to ignore the racing line and drive like a maniac, Viljoen is adamant that the game won't punish you. Instead, it moulds itself around your style of play, adapting the items you unlock to fit your racing profile. "For example," he explains, "if you're a more precise type of driver the game will lean toward unlocking

bonus events like hot laps, where you're going for timing. Whereas if you're an aggressive driver, it will lean toward unlocking the eliminator-type games where you bump other guys off the track, knocking

them out of the event."

On top of all this, Viljoen assures us that the customisation is more advanced than ever. The traditional race/win/spend model is back, but taken further: "For the first time we're doing high-detail cockpit models, which can also be upgraded. As you progress, you'll see it change – as you want more weight reduction, the passenger seat disappears, and if you upgrade your turbo charger you'll see a different dial to match that."

There's other new stuff too – big multiplayer and DLC plans, and a new drift mode which leverages the power of the impressive new physics for noisy, smoking runs through specially created circuits. Need For Speed's much-needed revamp seems to have jettisoned the gimmicks holding the series back, and replaced them with smart, accomplished driving. Sweet.





Stephen Viljoen
COO, Slightly Mad Studios

How difficult has it been to go from hardcore PC games to console racer?


Actually not as difficult as you'd image. We've evolved the physics engine that we used in our previous sim games to the point where it's not only better than anything we've done before, but it also has an interface that allows us to fully scale across the whole spectrum of the audience we need to cater for. At the easiest level it will automatically initiate the breaking so you don't miss your breaking spots, and steer into the driving line for you so you don't miss corners – all the way up to the other end, where you have hardcore simulation, far more so than any of the other competing titles.

So you feel you can compete with games like Grid?
I enjoy playing Grid, but you can't transfer real-world experience into the game, so something about it is not quite

simulation. If you play it as an arcade-type title it's great fun, but the physics aren't quite real-world – the way the car handles, the tyres. We got this right on [PC racer] GTR 2 – I was in Bahrain, and Sebastian Vettel was doing laps. He came in, sat down with the game, and took the same car on the same track and immediately put down really good lap times. I asked him what he thought, and he said, 'I'm really impressed with how I can come in from the track and apply the same techniques in the game.'

Are you adding to Need For Speed, or reinventing it?

I think it's a rebirth. Not just dropping everything that's been done before, because a few Need For Speed games have been good in the past. There's a personality in the franchise that we're trying to keep – when you're in the middle of a race, with the AI around you and it's really intense, you think 'this is Need For Speed'. Shift is full out Need For Speed, more so than it's been for a long time. It's more a case of just having dropped everything that doesn't work anymore, and bringing so much new to the table.



▲ Blur takes us one step closer to our ultimate dream: wasting time on networking sites and playing games at the same time.

Blur

Smudging the lines between racing, shooting... and socialising

For years Liverpool developer Bizarre Creations has been working on its hugely respected Project Gotham series, pushing the definition of authenticity and realism. But they're bored of that. They're bored of the way most driving titles are essentially a gruelling test of accuracy and endurance, throttling it from one apex to the next, and re-starting if you hit a corner at one degree beyond the correct angle.

In Blur you're up against 19 licensed, highly destructible cars on a series of swooping, winding courses, flashing through accurate representations of San Francisco, London and Tokyo. Sure, it sounds familiar and the physics and handling are accurate. But Blur is a little different. Vitally, there's a range of power-ups – like nitro for speed,

electro to distort a rival's view of the road, or shunt to bash cars into next Tuesday, which can be worked into combos for more powerful attacks. The resulting crashes are Jerry Bruckheimer-massive, but players are always stuck back on track in a competitive position. "Blur's power-ups are different," explains studio communications manager, Ben Ward. "They were always built as augmentations to your on-track strategy, rather than the deciders of the race outcome. They all help you race in some way... but they certainly don't do the actual racing for you!"

Adding to this is the game's unique structure, designed to mimic a social networking service. The front-end is essentially a Facebook page, where AI characters message you about forthcoming challenges.



Info

Games in series 0 (new)
Year introduced 2009
First game Blur
Last game N/A
Pub Activision
Dev Bizarre Creations
ETA Autumn 2009
Suitable for Non-purist racers with a social life.

"Blur re-invents the whole genre. No pressure, then."

In multiplayer you can create racing groups, based around your own customised challenges. "Normal menus are boring," says Ward. "Doing something more interactive gets gamers emotionally involved in the game, and also encourages them to progress through to the end. If you take a modern shooter, nowadays you expect all the levels to flow together in a coherent storyline. This is something we found lacking in the racing genre – the social network interface allows us to bring something new to racers."

Added to this is the fact that when you perform cool stunts while driving (like drifts and jumps), you pick up in-game fans. They're sort of like Twitter followers – the more entertaining you are, the bigger your fanbase. It's basically

a way of doing high scores for net-savvy casual gamers, and your in-game fans provide cash for upgrades. "It's not something like Forza where we expect you to tweak your engine and adjust your shocks," says Ward. "We let you buy upgrades that will increase the power of your nitro boost, or allow swapping between different types of power-up on the fly." So, Blur is sort of Gran Turismo meets Wipeout meets social networking, but at the same time it's a progression beyond them all. No one does forward-looking community-based driving titles like Bizarre Creations, and though many of the parts they've used are familiar off-the-shelf components, we could be looking at a very different racing machine when it's all hammered together. Most racing games sell themselves on advanced AI or groundbreaking physics. Blur is being pushed as a re-invention of the whole genre. No pressure then.

Info

Games in series 0 (new)
 Year introduced 2010
 First game F1 2010
 Last game N/A
 Publisher Codemasters
 Dev Codemasters
 ETA Spring 2010
 Suitable for Anyone who's been pining for an F1 game since Sony gave up the rights in 2007.

082

F1 2010

A glorious, Jenson Button-style return

Despite having a world championship to his name, Lewis Hamilton has never appeared in a videogame. When motor racing's highest class last appeared on PS3 over two years ago via Sony's Formula One Championship Edition, Michael Schumacher and David Coulthard were among the marquee names featured. So a new F1 game is long overdue; thankfully, Codemasters is bringing us one early next year.

"It's really simple. We've got to make the best F1 game ever. Literally nothing less will do," says senior executive producer Gavin Raeburn. The new game will be a sim that aims to emulate everything which happens out on the track, but Raeburn insists that doesn't mean it'll be boring. "The problems of previous games are well documented,

and they've led to a perception that F1 videogames have to be dry. I don't watch F1 for the telemetry – I love the drama, the rivalry and the glamour of it, and we've got big plans for how to make these part of the gameplay experience."

But what are those plans? Well, we've heard 24-way multiplayer being mooted for starters – and its inclusion would be huge, particularly as it'll incorporate as much or little of a race weekend as you wish, right down to qualifying. And while the game will retain the Ego engine that works so well in Grid and Dirt 2, Codemasters is creating a new damage engine specifically for F1. "Crashes in F1 look so spectacular because the car is designed to disintegrate away from the monocoque so that the energy of the crash dissipates, and the driver is protected," says Raeburn, "so [creating the new engine] is something we're very much looking forward to!" All sounds pretty special. Except the bit about having to wait 'til next year to play it.



Gran Turismo 5

The grand master of the racing world

This is the one to beat. Whatever you think about the Gran Turismo legacy – the ultra anal handling, the geekboy licence structure – it is the most important driving series of the last 15 years. Series creator Kazunori Yamauchi recently claimed, “As long as we actually achieve our goals and fulfil our expectations, I’m sure it would set the new industry standard.” They will. It will.

We know from teaser package GT5 Prologue to expect astonishing visual clarity, both in terms of environmental realism and vehicle design. Car damage is in for the first time (the latest demo shows the bonnet of a Subaru, popped and gaping open), as well as authentic weather effects and, at last, improved AI. Prologue introduced the other killer feature – 16-player online races, a mode sure to be updated and enhanced for the full release. More recently, we’ve seen two new licensed game modes – NASCAR and World Rally Championship – confirming

Polyphony’s ongoing quest to capture every facet of the pro racing experience. Cars and track lists are still under wraps; Prologue had over 70 models, we’ll get up to ten times that in GT5, including Ferrari, Nissan, Ford, BMW, Aston Martin, that lovely GTbyCITROËN concept car... and loads more. Rumours are that there are 90 circuits – with Prologue, a mix of the real (Nurburgring, Daytona, Fuji speedway) with the fictitious. Forum-lurkers are also getting excited about a design-your-own-track mode, but Polyphony is keeping well out of the speculation.

If decent AI and damage are there, and the vehicle list is as deep as expected, the only question since GT4. Titles way in which are our tastes have evolved since GT4. Titles like Grid 2, Blur and Need For Speed Shift are busy trying to redefine the driving experience, taking us away from the stately, exacting universe that GT inhabits. It will set a new industry standard, we all know it. But will that be enough?

“GT5 will set a new industry standard. But will that be enough?”

Info

Games in series 4
Year introduced 1997
First game Gran Turismo
Last game Gran Turismo 4
Pub Sony
Dev Polyphony Digital
ETA December 2009
Suitable for Driving purists, graphics whores.



PS3





▲ Things explode in Split Second all the time – getting around even the easiest tracks is like driving through a war zone.

Split Second

Car chase thrills with the world as your weapon

Split Second is a Michael Bay car chase sequence, but with you behind the wheel. It's sexy, it's fast, it has big orange sunsets, and at certain points on each track you can trigger enormous, destructive set-pieces to scupper your rival racers. They're called power plays, and activating them on the industrial dock circuit can send giant cranes crashing down across the track, or flip cargo containers onto the road to create path-blocking chicanes. A three-stage meter – charged by pulling off long drifts, landing jumps and drafting your opponents – dictates the scenic traps you can trigger. The first two blue-coloured bars spark minor events – a flipped bus, a tanker dropped from a hovering helicopter – but power-up to red stage three and you can radically alter the circuit. On the airport stage for example, you can make a whole section of the runway collapse, redirecting you through the passenger terminal while unlucky opponents crash and burn, and on the docks the back-end of a moored tanker blows out and turns the ship into a giant ramp. There are six basic tracks, but each one can be altered like this in several ways.

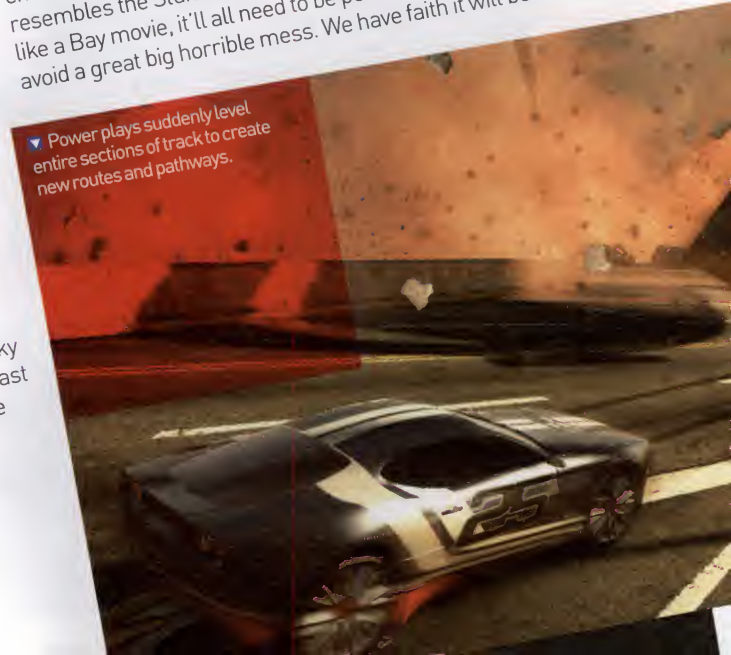
Handling-wise, we're in Outrun territory – solid, chunky – and it takes a good yank on the steering to get your beast to drift. There are exciting plans for the multiplayer side

of things, including online tournaments that use limited edition cars only available during specific competition periods, and a novel way of showing your online rank: a number by the side of your car, tied to the percentile you fall into (so if you're in the top 20%, say, it'll be a 20).

Real racing

Burnout and Need For Speed are clear inspirations in terms of the driving experience, but with the environmental interaction, Split Second more closely resembles the Stuntman games – like them, and indeed like a Bay movie, it'll all need to be perfectly executed to avoid a great big horrible mess. We have faith it will be.

▼ Power plays suddenly level entire sections of track to create new routes and pathways.



Info

Games in series 0 (new)
Year introduced 2010
First game Split Second
Last game N/A
Pub Disney Interactive
Dev Black Rock Studio
ETA Spring 2010
Suitable for Action movie fanatics and automotive anarchists.



Nick Baynes Game director, Black Rock Studio

What top-secret new info can you give us about Split Second?

We're bringing two-player split-screen to the game. It was one of the most commonly requested features when [our previous game] Pure came out, and given the competitive and explosive nature of Split Second, we've moved heaven and Earth to make sure it's made it into this game.

Are you guys using the same engine as Pure or is this a completely new piece of software?

At Black Rock we have a shared tech engine that is developed further for each game, so we come from a shared starting point but with plenty of new tech added specifically for the unique features of Split Second.

We originally described Split Second as 'Burnout with bombs'. Harsh or fair?

We're an arcade racer with explosions so it's not completely inaccurate I suppose, although I think when you play the game you realise just how different it really is. I think we draw as much inspiration from other genres as we do racers. Someone at E3 said it was like racing through a first-person shooter.

How has the announcement of other racers like Blur affected your approach?

We're always aware of the competition, and ideas that are executed well remain in the back of your mind. This doesn't really affect our approach to Split Second though. It's good to be aware of what else is out there, but changing your game because of what others are doing leads to mediocre me-too titles.

Are there any competing games you're excited about playing?

There are some big racing games that I'm looking forward to playing, [but] to be honest, we do get excited about games other than racers too! Stuff like Modern Warfare 2 and the new Uncharted. The kind of explosive tech, emotion and drama they have is as relevant to Split Second as, say, the new Forza.

Speaking of Burnout, what do you make of its DLC-driven business model?

Criterion has done an amazing job creating and supporting the community for Burnout. I think most publishers will be looking at that model and considering how relevant it is to their titles. I'd definitely love it if people were still actively playing Split Second online 18 months after release, like they do Burnout Paradise!

▲ The cars are shiny, spoiler-laden monsters with giant go-faster stripes. They're amazing.



Info

Games in series 7
Year introduced 2001
First game Burnout
Last game Burnout Paradise
Pub EA
Dev Criterion
ETA Ongoing
Suitable for Anyone who likes driving fast, pulling off stunts and making huge crashes.

Burnout Paradise

Still the biggest, still the best. But what's next?

Confession time: we don't know exactly what's coming next from Burnout Paradise, the massive open-world racer which has evolved into the best driving game currently available on PS3 (for our money, anyway) thanks to an unprecedented stream of awesome downloadable content. But we've included it here anyway – partly because we're obsessed with it (OPM madmen Nathan and James are currently playing through all 500 online challenges to unlock one last car) and partly because we're certain that *something* else is coming, even if we're not quite sure what it might be.

How do we know? Because we spoke to the game's producer, Pete Lake, and though he didn't let slip any specific details, he did suggest work was ongoing. "Right

now we are focused on developing Burnout Paradise and seeing how far we can extend it for our players" he admits, in response to a question about whether we would ever see a separately released Burnout Paradise 2.

A sequel in the immediate future looks unlikely, then, but the silver lining is that the last piece of DLC was also Paradise's best – Big Surf Island, a sizeable chunk of extra real estate which condensed everything brilliant about the game (billboard-smashing, super-jumping, bleary-eyed boosting) and wrapped it up in a tidy, accessible, £9.99 package. It's not only reinvigorated the game for thousands of gamers, but also taught many of us how the original game *should* have been played all along. Whatever Criterion give us next will have to be pretty special to top it.



▼ Big Surf Island is the latest piece of incredible Burnout DLC. Will the new stuff never end? We really, really hope not.



Info

Games in series 7
Year introduced 1998
First game Colin McRae Rally
Last game Colin McRae Dirt
Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters Racing Studio
ETA September 2009
Suitable for People who can still drive when the road is only visible through a side window.

■ Racing through South London without traffic at over 100mph – you'll never get to do this in real life.

Colin McRae Dirt 2

The latest from Codies is a brash, loud festival of filth

It barely seems worth mentioning that Colin McRae Dirt 2 is an incredible looking game – unless you've somehow subscribed to the audiobook edition of OPM, these screens tell you everything you need to know. It's gorgeous. But it's the stuff under the bonnet that really makes Dirt 2 special.

The new handling model adds genuine weight to the vehicles, and while they're still responsive, managing the shifting balance of the car over bumps and through turns is a far more tactile and rewarding experience this time around. Codies' long-standing flirtation with storyline in racing games continues as well, with professional lunatic Ken Block and his merry band of extreme sports

nutcases chatting to you mid-race and providing cheery encouragement. Of course, it'll have to be careful not to overstep the mark. Adding character is fine; beating you around the head with endless 'street' bleating is not, so we're hopeful that some restraint will be demonstrated as the career wears on. The noisy on-track action is mirrored in a bustling paddock area that serves as the front end. It's as stylish as the first game's menu system but far less sterile, and adds the kind of off-track coherency between events that so many racing games are lacking.

And the best news? We're as certain as we can be that it's going to be fantastic. Codemasters has become so consistent with its racing titles that Dirt 2 is one of the most bankable games of this year, in any genre. And if that takes the thrill out of the chase, we're sure the in-game action will more than make up for it. If you want to find out for sure, check the exclusive review in next month's OPM.





Info

Games in series 0 (new)
Year introduced 2010
First game ModNation Racers
Last game N/A
Pub Sony
Dev United Front Games
ETA 2010
Suitable for Kart-racing battlers who like to play dress-up.



▲ When we get the game we're totally going to make ourselves look like a giant-headed Paul Newman.

ModNation Racers

Need a shortcut to win? Then make it yourself

LittleBigPlanet meets kart racing. That's the hook for ModNation Racers, and it must be troubling for anyone currently working on a driving game to know that even with all those painstaking hours put into realistic physics and vehicle damage, they may well end up being pipped by a stupid little goth caricature with pink hair in a car cobbled together in 50 seconds.

With arcade physics for epic collisions and sumptuous drifts, and a track creator mode that makes building awesome circuits a doddle, the emphasis here is very much on fun. There's a boost meter and various power-ups – missiles and shields, as well as items that give you control of obstacles on the track. "We're aiming for weapons that people will enjoy using, and enjoy being

hit with as well," says game designer Mat Thomas. But ModNation Racers also has just enough realism to give the driving a stern edge. "There's a level of sophistication we're going for that goes above and beyond the traditional kart-racing game."

And, as if the racing wasn't enough, you also get to build your own tracks, racers and cars (the only rules: four wheels, one engine, one driver's seat) and then decorate everything with paint, decals, colours and textures. Like a teeny, Top Gear edition of LBP. You can also control the weather, alter the terrain, and paint on props like trees and villages. And when you come to actually plotting out your track, it's not with some dry level editor that requires hours of pre-planning; you simply drive it, and it appears underneath your car. Just like in LBP you can rewind if you make mistakes, and once you're done, you can publish the whole thing online to share with your friends. It really is that easy. And this really is going to be sensational.

Sonic & Sega All-Star Racing

"It's-a-me, Mar... I mean, Sonic The Hedgehog"

It's not sh*t! Really! Yeah, we were surprised too. But our hands-on with two tracks from SASAR (an acronym which sounds like a life-wrecking disease and hence we won't be using again) has temporarily subdued our natural cynicism. As we predicted last month, it plays a lot like Nintendo's Mario Kart games given a Sega skin. So the iconic red shell homing missile becomes a flying shark, while the speed-up mushroom is instead a speed-up red trainer. The driving is simpleton friendly, with lots of scope for keeping your foot (well, finger) down and little need for the brakes. In fact, we'd often overdraft when cornering because it's so heavily AI-assisted. Let's hope there's an option to tweak this. With Sheffield-based Sumo Digital – the team behind OutRun PSN and Sega Superstars Tennis – handling development, there's every chance that this could be something we've never had – the PlayStation equivalent of Mario Kart. The best news of all: while we know Sonic, Tails and AiAi are in, right now there's no sign of stupid Knuckles. Note to Sumo: please, please keep it that way.

▣ Surely Sonic would be able to run faster than all the other cars?

▣ Future in-race abuse: "Look where your maracas have got you now, you grinning idiot!"

▣ Like his nude modelling career, Tails' plane never quite takes off.

Info

Games in series 0 (new)
Year introduced 2010
First game Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing
Last game N/A
Pub Sega
Dev Sumo Digital
ETA Spring 2010
Suitable for Anyone who's spent 13 years playing for a decent kart racer on PlayStation. (So, everyone.)

In the mood for...

Bad hair

Brushing up on the worst head-nests in gaming. Because you're worth it

Forget about accurately rendering the streets of New York. Developers need to work on hair. From clip-on Lego-style wigs to flowing, textured layers, it all looks bum. Take Snake. *He's cool. His mullet? Less so. And Bobby Zilch's orange 'fro? Just no.* The worst part? As big blocky lumps of matter give way to individually crafted strands, it's getting no better. Bionic Commando's Nathan Spencer might have a cool robot arm but there's no getting past that dreadful festival weave. Here are PS3's worst...

Cloud (Final Fantasy VII)

A merc who was once a member of elite military force SOLDIER, Cloud's real skill is backcombing. Come closer and you can smell the mousse. Eventually, it's revealed Cloud was never in SOLDIER, his false memories a combination of his friend, a SOLDIER called Zack, and events following an attack by villain Sephiroth. The hair's all his though.

PS
3

Nathan 'RAD' Spencer (Bionic Commando)

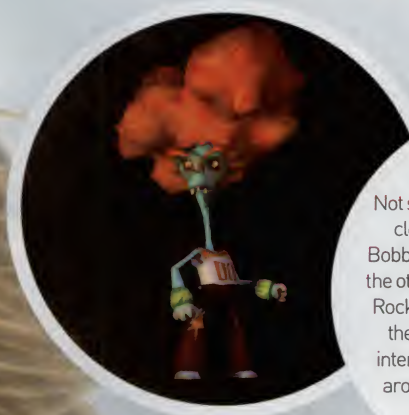
Nathan's two outstanding features are a robot arm that says 'bionically-enhanced super soldier' and matted dreads that say 'gap year student'. With a mechanical claw for a hand, Nate wouldn't want to be combing a short back and sides anyway. Besides, shooting bad guys leaves little time for haircare.

Paul Phoenix (Tekken series)

He claims to be the "greatest fighter in the universe" – don't we all. What's in no dispute, though, is that he's clearly the master of hairspray. No amount of fighting has ever dented that 'maximum hold' look – part crew cut, part pencil top eraser. Tekken 6 even adds a move that keeps making his hair grow until it sticks out of his head like a furry pole. Brutal.

intermission

A tasty PlayStation snack

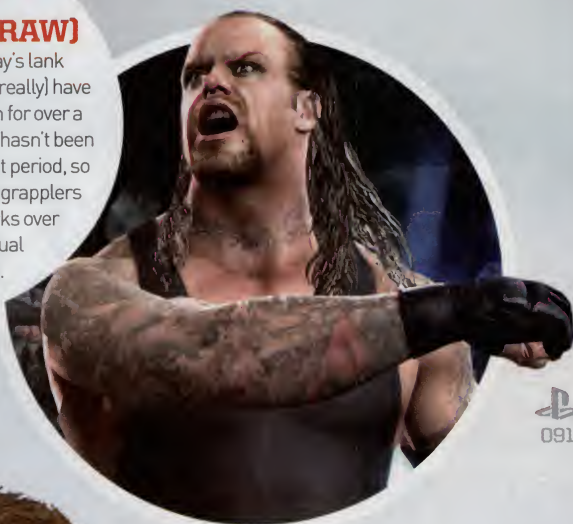


Bobby Zilch (Pysconauts)

Not so much a 'do' as a mushrooming cloud of wrongness latched on to Bobby's head like a nasty growth. While the other children are at the Whispering Rock Psychic Summer Camp to boost their mental powers, Bobby is only interested in pushing the weaker kids around. Perhaps this hideous 'style' is the reason why the guy is such a bully.

The Undertaker (WWE Smackdown vs RAW)

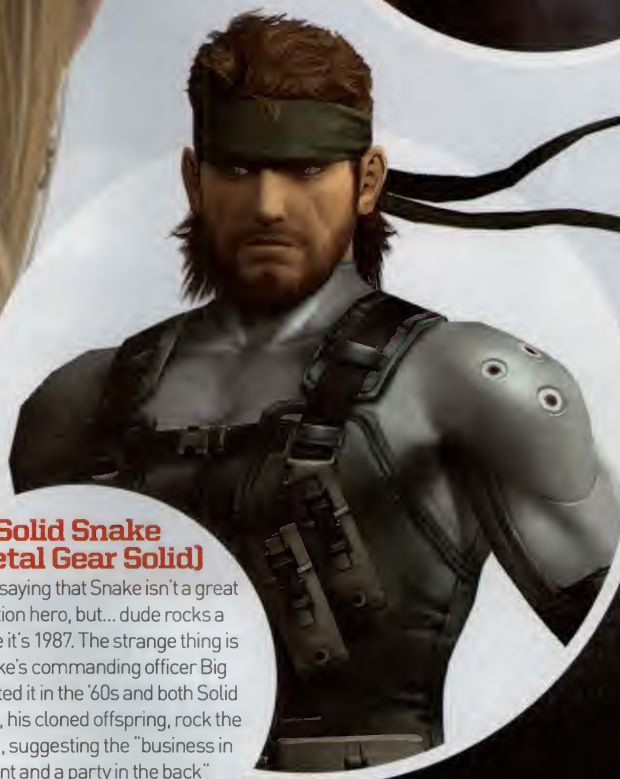
Mark 'Undertaker' Calaway's lank dyed-black locks (he's ginger really) have been dirtying up Smackdown for over a decade. As far as we can tell it hasn't been washed for the duration of that period, so we can only pity the legion of grapplers who've put him in headlocks over the years. Even in virtual form, it's still gross.



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Solid Snake (Metal Gear Solid)

We're not saying that Snake isn't a great PlayStation hero, but... dude rocks a mullet like it's 1987. The strange thing is that Snake's commanding officer Big Boss started it in the '60s and both Solid and Liquid, his cloned offspring, rock the look hard, suggesting the "business in the front and a party in the back" hairstyle is programmed into their DNA.



Now have your say

Any terrible hair you think should have made the cut? Let us know at opm@futurenet.com. Here are a few that almost made it...

■ Predator (Predator: Concrete Jungle) The braids look pretty awful but is it actually hair?

■ Agent 47 (Hitman) Technically he possesses 'no hair at all' but it's definitely a bad look.

■ Sephiroth (Final Fantasy VII) Sep's glossy, over-conditioned mane is shocking but rival Cloud beats him.

back issues

Feed your obsession



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- Heavy Rain
- Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
- Resident Evil 5
- Overlord 2



Issue #028 February 2009

- Killzone 2
- 2009 preview special
- God Of War III
- Kaz Hirai interview



Issue #029 March 2009

- Resident Evil 5
- Home
- inFamous
- Street Fighter IV



Issue #030 April 2009

- God Of War III
- Operation Flashpoint Dragon Rising
- How to be a PS3 god
- Split Second

Back issues

Late to the party? There's no need to miss out...



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- Final Fantasy XIII
- 24 hours on PSN
- Modern Warfare 2



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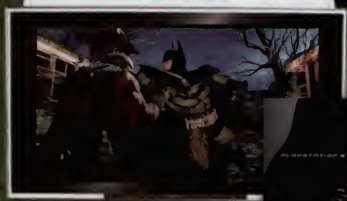
Issue #034 August 2009

- Brink
- Uncharted 2
- PSPgo
- God Of War III

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The
OPM review
setup



Our review code is tested on hi-def and standard-def TVs to ensure we know how games perform at both ends of the scale. Our HD setup is a 70" Sony Bravia with Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK Reviews

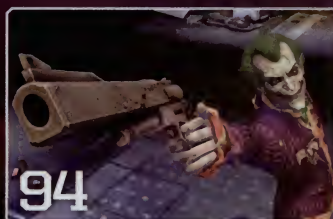
PS
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Your essential guide to every new release

The reason Batman is the coolest superhero around is he's not really super: he's just a hard, rich and slightly mental dude who really likes the gym. And the reason this month's exclusive cover game, *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, is so good is because it totally gets this. It drills right down to the core of the Dark Knight – fighting, gadgets, stringing people up in the dark, more fighting – and gives us the best comic book game on PS3.

And the good stuff doesn't stop there. Our second big exclusive is *Ashes Cricket 2009*, Codemasters' update of its classic Brian Lara series. As we type this, half the team is huddled over a radio listening to the second test, holding up homemade '4' and '6' placards. It's already a huge summer of cricket – find out whether this is the game to see you through it on p100.

Plus there's loads more – online World War 2 shooter *Battlefield 1943*, tatty tie-in *Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen*, magic sequel *Harry Potter* and super-addictive puzzler *Zuma* to name a few. Should keep you busy 'til next time, right?



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BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM
The Joker escapes *inside* Arkham, with a mean-fisted Batman giving chase through the gothic labyrinth. Brilliant comic action.



100
ASHES CRICKET 2009
The oldest rivalry in global sport, coupled with mechanics nabbed from *MLB 09: The Show*, make for a belting cricket sim.



102
BATTLEFIELD 1943
Drive tanks, fly planes and shoot down the enemy in this really tight sequel to the classic PC team shooter.

How we score our reviews...

10 Essential

Instant classic that's as close as it gets to PlayStation perfection.

9 Outstanding

Highly recommended, and an investment you won't regret.

8 Very good

Mostly excellent, but held back by one or two minor flaws.

7 Good

Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement. Rent it first.

6 Reasonable

A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Average

A game that is both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Below average

Too flawed to be anything more than a brief curiosity.

3 Poor

A seriously flawed game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful

A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it as you would a bullet.

1 Horrific

Buy this shocker and watch your console self-combust in protest.

**GOLD
AWARD**
PlayStation
Official Magazine

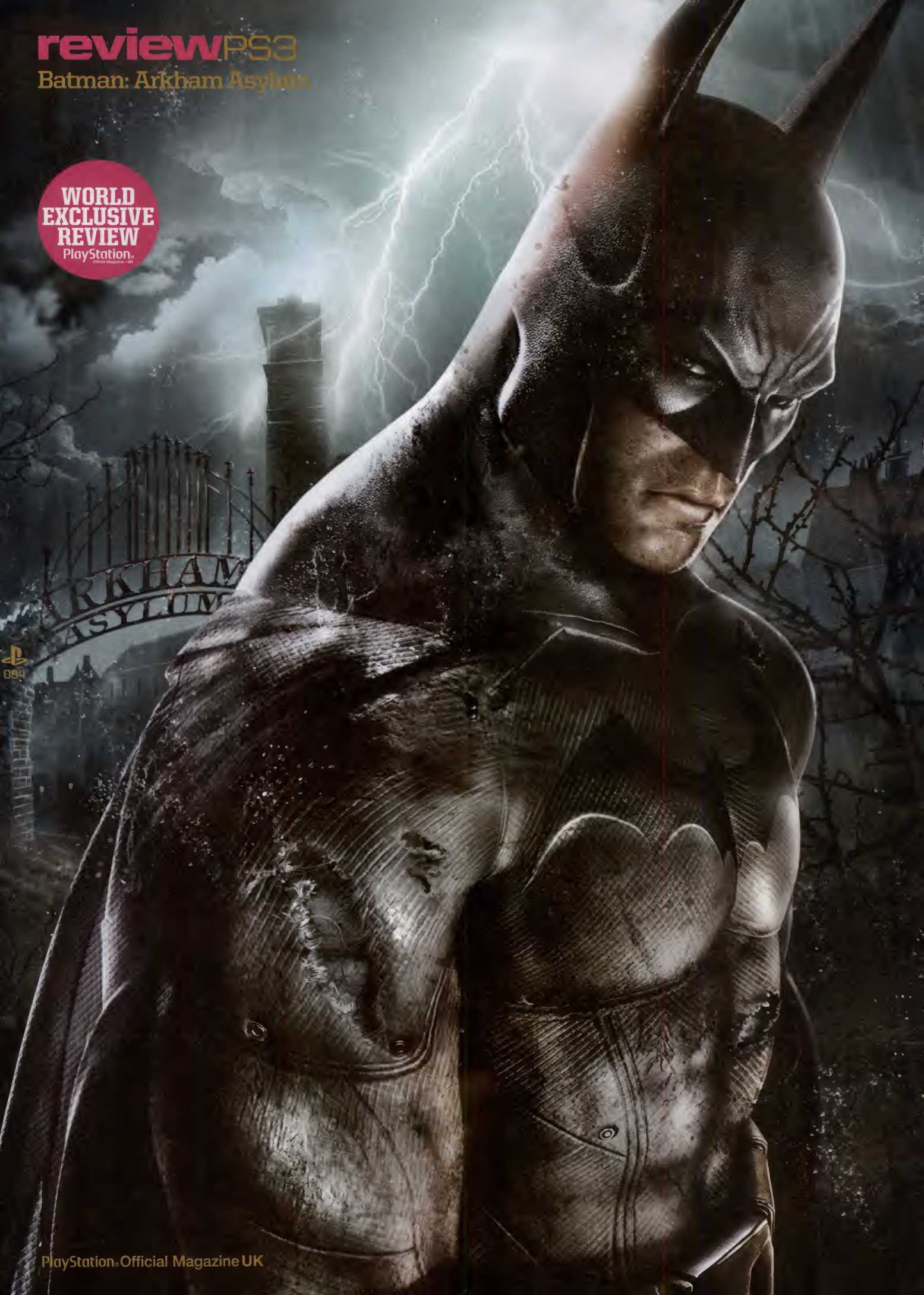
Our highest accolade

The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics and profound appeal.

reviewPS3

Batman: Arkham Asylum

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW**
PlayStation.
Official Magazine • UK



PS
094



Hero quest

Batman Arkham Asylum

One Dark Knight it's definitely worth braving...

Early on during Batman's pursuit of the Joker through the twisted gothic architecture of Arkham Asylum, the big man is clearing a room of poisonous laughing gas. He swoops to a platform from which one of the Joker's henchmen is clinging precariously, overhanging the fatal green swirl. Then, in a moment of perfect Batman-ness, he hauls the goon to safety with a single steely arm, before pounding a fist into the back of his head and knocking him out cold. It's classic Bats – heroic, but also brutal and, at a base level, deeply crazy.

One of Arkham Asylum's biggest strengths – one of many, it turns out – is how faithfully and vividly it captures the heart of its heroes and villains. Like Batman, the Joker is spot-on too – Mark



Info

Format PS3 **ETA**
28 Aug **Pub** Eidos
Dev Rocksteady
Players 1 **Web**
batmanarkham
asylum.com **It's like**
Ninja Gaiden wearing
a Batman cosplay
outfit to a Bioshock
convention.

Hamill (yes, from Star Wars, but more importantly from DC's animated Batman series) again lends his brilliantly manic and furious voice to the shock-haired master criminal. The game's opening, semi-playable cut-scene, with an imposing, Christian Bale-physique Bats delivering a giggling Joker to the Asylum (where – of course – he breaks free and seizes control) is basically a chance to size the pair up, to wow at how accurately they and the gothic labyrinth of Arkham have been recreated, and at the broody, muscular Unreal engine visuals.

Once the Joker is free – thanks to the help of his deranged moll, Harley Quinn – it's up to Batman to chase him through the Asylum and bring him in. The setup is tight and smart – Arkham is a great

choice of setting, usefully self-enclosed but intricate enough to offer variety and depth, and also full of Bat-villains for the game to use (which it does sparingly and intelligently). Casting the Joker as lead villain is another smart touch, his typically twisting, genius plan transforming the shadowy asylum into a boobytrapped maze, which Batman has to punch, creep and think his way through.

Assault and battery

Which is exactly what he does. The gameplay breaks down into three main, interrelated areas: punching people in the face and head, creeping about (often leading up to punching people in the face and head), and navigating the maze-like grounds and cavernous interiors of the ►



Five things you must see in Batman



PERSPECTIVE RIDDLES

The Riddler sets Bats three types of challenge, the best of which are optical illusion-style perspective puzzles with question marks scrawled over the asylum.



PLAY AS THE JOKER

On PS3 only. Play through the game's high-score challenge rooms as the Joker, with X-ray specs and exploding teeth instead of night vision and Bat toys.



ARKHAM AT NIGHT

The asylum looks great on the inside, but from the outside it's incredible, with a huge glowing moon hanging over Gotham's distant skyscrapers.



THE SCARECROW

We can't tell you what the Scarecrow does in the game – that would mean massive spoilers – but suffice to say it's tense, nervy and really well done.



CLAYFACE'S CON

At one point Bats finds a glass cell holding asylum boss Mr. Sharp. Only then he turns into commissioner Gordon – this is morphing villain Clayface.



PS3
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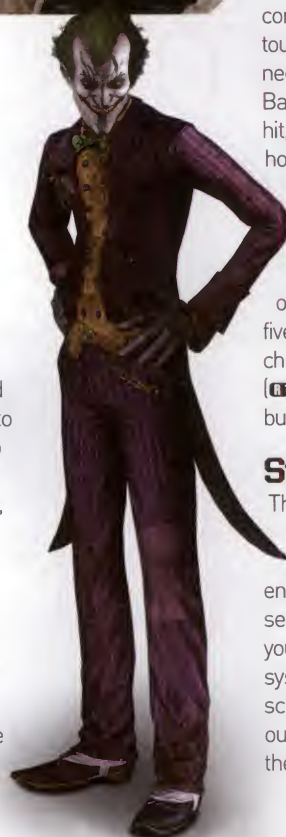
“You are Batman. And he's all about agility and gadgets.”

Asylum (before... yes). And it's brilliant, even though the fighting is *really* basic – (○) to strike, (△) to counter, (□) to block. So, just one button for hitting people, which *should* mean a shallow, repetitive system, but somehow doesn't.

True, the initial combos you knock out are dead simple – punch punch kick, or punch kick kick – but the magic of the system is in the counter button. Typically, you'll be taking on a circle of four or five enemies at once (skinhead/clown hybrids, shipped in from Gotham's Blackgate Penitentiary as part of the Joker's takeover) who attack in slightly convenient ones and twos, with blue warning symbols appearing over their heads. This signals that they're open – time it right and Bats will break smoothly from his current animation to block their incoming strike and hit back with one of

his own, all using a Bourne-like slap-and-crunch fighting style.

The key isn't just cracking heads, it's building up a flowing combo of strikes and counterstrikes, a bit like a slightly simplified Ninja Gaiden. It's not a button-masher, even if it might feel like one at first. Hammer (○) mindlessly and you'll trip over a counter opening; slip into a rhythm of (○), (○), (△) and you'll end up countering thin air and breaking your combo. The system is really responsive, registering even last-gasp button presses and enabling you to keep combos going when you're super-stretched (catching a swinging fist that looks immovably bound for the back of your head is *brilliantly* satisfying), and if you get good you can take out whole groups of goons without breaking stride (there's a Trophy for flowing together 40



▲ Gliding from the tall buildings in the grounds is amazing. Naturally, there's a Trophy for it...



▲ To crack electric locks there's an ace, two-analogue-stick picking mechanic. BANG!

consecutive strikes). Things do get tougher, though. Knife-wielding enemies need to be stunned with a flash of Batman's cape (○) before they can be hit, and you can only attack heavies holding tazer batons ('electric b*stards' as I affectionately call them) by leaping over them with (△) and doing them in from behind. Add in one-hit-kill throws and blows (△+○ or (○)+(△) activated with every chain of five successful strikes, and the ability to chuck Batarangs as part of your combo (□), and you're looking at an easy-to-use but satisfyingly deep system.

Stealthy options

The fighting happens as you encounter guards scattered through the asylum, and especially during scripted end-of-area events, with the Joker sending in waves of goons and taunting you over Arkham's security monitor system. But it's only during these scripted events that you *have* to duke it out – in the open areas, you usually have the option of keeping it quiet, using

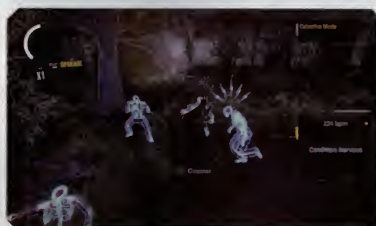


Batman's Batclaw, his tactical detective vision, and his ability to walk silently in giant boots, despite weighing 400lbs.

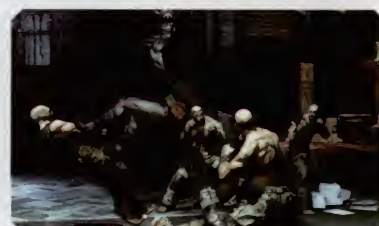
The Batclaw is a Tomb Raider-style grapple which hoists you to whatever ledge you're targeting. It's maybe a little overpowered – an onscreen **BT** symbol pops up whenever a compatible ledge is in sight, and Bats can heave himself from what look like impossible positions. That said, it's quick and fun to use, and makes exploring the air vents and ledges of the Asylum dead simple ('Zzzzzrrrrrrp!'). The detective vision is also unusually strong – it's like mega night vision, giving you a tiny stats display of how many enemies are in your current location and whether they're armed, and also allows you to see their skeletal outlines through walls, floors and all other obstacles. Together, they're almost too much; too easy to use. But you *are* Batman. He's all about agility and gadgets – dude's got an unlicensed jet he flies through Gotham – and the ease of these mechanics take this for granted in a just about justifiable way.

It also means that creeping up on goons and choking them out is real easy. Say you're in the sizeable Arkham grounds, for instance. This is the hub area which connects the various wings of the Asylum, and it's dominated by a series of interconnected watchtowers and walkways, with red laser sniper ►

► "Oh no he isn't!"
[terrifying Bale voice]
"OH YES I AM!"



► The detective vision is so easy to use you'll play big chunks of the game without switching it off.



► The Joker's goons are unusually tough, which gives a mean edge to the hand-to-hand combat.

PS
097

Arkham's most mental

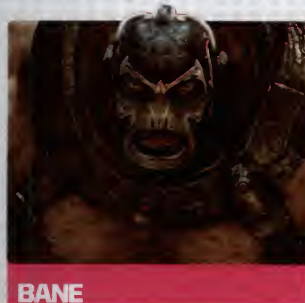
Three of Batman's maddest enemies



ZSASZ

One of the more menial bosses in Arkham Asylum, Zsasz doesn't have any powers as such, he's just full-on nuts. He sees murder as a gift to his victims, and scars his body with every new kill.

Real name	Victor Zsasz
Previously	A wealthy heir
Debut	Shadow Of The Bat, 1992
Power	Psychosis
Weapons	A knife
Unique feature	Self-inflicted scars



BANE

Bane was condemned to serve his father's life sentence and grew up murdering his way through prison. He was then chosen as a test subject for the drug Venom, which made him even stronger and meaner.

Real name	Unknown
Previously	A prison inmate from birth
Debut	Vengeance Of Bane, 1993
Power	Super strength
Weapons	Massive fists
Unique feature	Grotesque mutant body



POISON IVY

A shy botanist studying under Dr Jason Woodrue (later the terribly named Floronic Man), Ivy was injected with experimental plant stuff and made into a powerful eco-terrorist and Batman enemy.

Real Name	Pamela Lillian Isley
Previously	An experimental botanist
Debut	Batman #181, 1966
Power	Mixed human/plant DNA
Weapons	Lethal poison kiss
Unique feature	Red hair, greenish skin



▲ The visual detail is phenomenal. (You can totally see his wiener.)



▲ No Clooney-style nipples on the new suit, but the rippling abs are a *bit* much, no?



▲ Luckily for sneaky Bats, whoever built Arkham Asylum had a really big thing for gargoyles.

sights peering down from patrolling guards. To take them out and cross the grounds without getting shot, you can simply click on detective mode to reveal the position of your enemies, zip yourself up to the walkway, then creep behind the (admittedly rather dopey) watchmen and press **X** to perform a silent takedown.

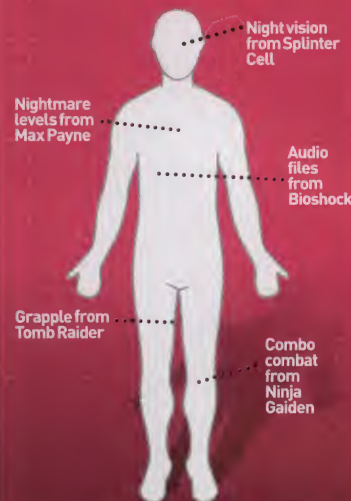
Predatory instincts

Just like the big end-of-area brawls, there are moments when your stealth

skills are tested in a more controlled way, with a game mechanic dubbed 'invisible predator'. There are several of these sections through the campaign, each of which take place in high-roofed halls or chambers filled with enemies. And these enemies are *all* armed. The game is pretty stern when it comes to gunfire – Bats can't stand more than a second or so of being hosed before collapsing into a grey screen of sadness – so a stand-up fight is off the cards.

Videogame Frankenstein

Arkham Asylum is better than the sum of its parts, but its parts are familiar...



Instead – and this is where the conceit of the mechanic almost falls to bits – each of these rooms is lined with a row of gargoyles, which you can perch on and swing between to stay hidden from view. You can *sort* of justify the gargoyles' presence on the grounds – Arkham is a comic book mishmash of architecture anyway – but it stretches believability to breaking point. Luckily, playing these sections is really fun. They're like little puzzles: how do I silently smash up these men without any of the others seeing me and filling me up with bullets? There's plenty of room to improvise.

So you could Batarang one goon (two, if you've got the dual-Batarang upgrade), leaving them temporarily stunned, before swooping down on another using your cape as a glider holding **R2** (or **D**) to glide

Split-screen Two ways to clear a room of goons

START



Eyeing the prize

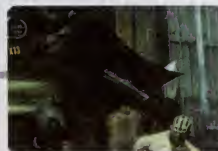
Bats stands at the top of a big hall in Arkham Mansion, with a group of Joker henchmen beneath him. How does he make it through?



Go loud from the off. Break cover and kick a man's face.



Start fighting everyone in the room at the same time...



...and don't stop until you knock the last one off his feet. WHACK.



Throw a guided Batarang to stealthily take down one goon.



Use night vision to track the movements of your enemies.



Take them down one by one without being seen. Deadly.

FINISH



Stack of bodies

Either way what you end up with is a big pile of sleeping thugs, and a clear path to continue your pursuit of the Joker through Arkham.



into a two-footed kick. Wallop!). All the Joker's henchmen wear suicide collars, which set off a [creeping laughing] alarm when they're knocked unconscious, so once you've sent one to sleep, the others will investigate.

Silent Knight

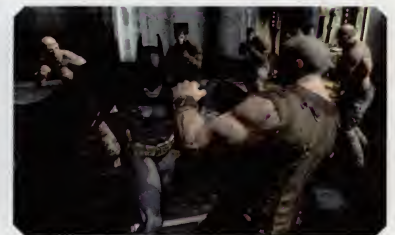
Take advantage of this, and you can set traps – like spraying a remote-detonated jelly explosive on the floor next to a conked-out victim [this and other toys are switched in and out of Bats' utility belt using the D-pad], before zipping up to the rafters and triggering the explosion. Or you can hang, ninja-like, underneath one of the gargoyles and string enemies up as they walk underneath. You can take it slow, waiting for one to break off from the others, or you can take risks and creep around at ground level, diving into maintenance shafts under the floor and popping up to surprise your prey.

Despite the slight sense that it stands apart from the rest of the game, it's really playable, and offers a subtle counterpoint to the brutal fist-fighting. And, happily, it's not only the action which the game gets right. There's a terrific sense of care in Arkham Asylum's use of its DC heritage, to the

▲ Are utility belts still okay? Really? It's 2009, people.



▲ Restraining Killer Croc with rusty chains is like tying up a rabid dog with dreams and cobwebs.



▲ During massive circle scraps enemies rip pipes off the walls to use as weapons.

extent that it rivals Bioshock in terms of depth and detail. Not only are several super villains directly roped into the plot (Killer Croc and Poison Ivy are bosses, while the Scarecrow features in a brilliant series of twisted, hallucinogenic levels), but there are dozens of collectible villain biographies and interview clips scattered through the Asylum.

Best of all, while the Riddler doesn't appear in the main story, he is in contact with Batman over radio, setting you a series of puzzles. These include finding fairly standard question mark-shaped hidden packages, and more impressively solving riddles in each of the game's rooms by scanning objects relating to the Riddler's clues (one

about Batman reflecting on his actions needs you to scan a bathroom mirror, for instance). Finally, there are dazzling, perspective-based puzzles – graffiti'd question marks littered around Arkham which only fall in to view when you're standing in just the right spot. They add depth and longevity to the game, and integrate the Riddler in a clever, unforced way.

Basically, the whole game is a class act. The fighting is sophisticated but arcade-addictive, the visuals are stylish, and the Lara-like exploration is smartly done. Plus the DC heritage feels all-encompassing like a big blanket. Arkham Asylum is comfortably the best comic book game that PlayStation's ever had, and is up there with the system's best actioners, full stop. **Nathan Ditum**





✓ England captain Andrew Strauss is one of the better likenesses on show.

100

Superb innings

Ashes Cricket 2009

WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW
PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

Exquisite strokeplay seals an English victory

Farewell, then, Brian Lara. Two years after leaving the international cricket stage, Codemasters has also retired him from his own series of PlayStation games. While it may be bad news for the West Indian legend, it's great for the rest of us: this complete reboot for Codies' 15-years-old cricket series sees the focus shift not only to the tiny urn over which England and Australia do battle every two years, but also to authenticity. Every tweak and improvement upon Lara's final outing, the mediocre Brian Lara International Cricket 2007, has been made to up the realism. And it's absolutely paid off.

Info

Format PS3
ETA 7 August Pub
Codemasters Dev
Transmission Games
Players 1-2 Web
codemasters.co.uk
It's like The only way you're guaranteed to bring home the urn.

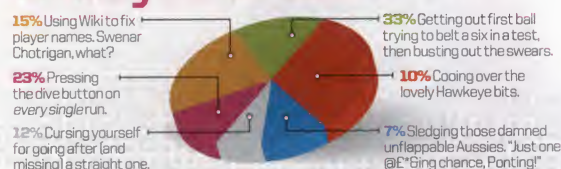
In a masterstroke, everything has been made simpler and more contextual. So there's no more fannying about with fielding except when your team has a catching opportunity, at which point you have to press **X** to make the catch when an icon around the ball turns green. For a sharp slip chance, the window is small; for a dolly into the outfield, the icon stays green for ages.

Perfect catch

The mechanic is just common sense, really: it makes you feel like you're controlling a pro player, but in the most user-friendly manner possible. It's also carried over into the bowling method. Pick a style of delivery by pressing a face button, use the D-pad to aim it, then stop a coloured gauge in the correct spot to pinpoint its accuracy. The concept's clearly nicked from baseball game MLB 09: The Show, but there's no complaining from us as it works brilliantly.

Batting is more fun and realistic than

What you do in... AC 2009



Hammering Oz
Because overcoming the Aussies is the whole point of the game. And it's always fun. Bok! That'll be six runs, Mr Hilfenhaus.

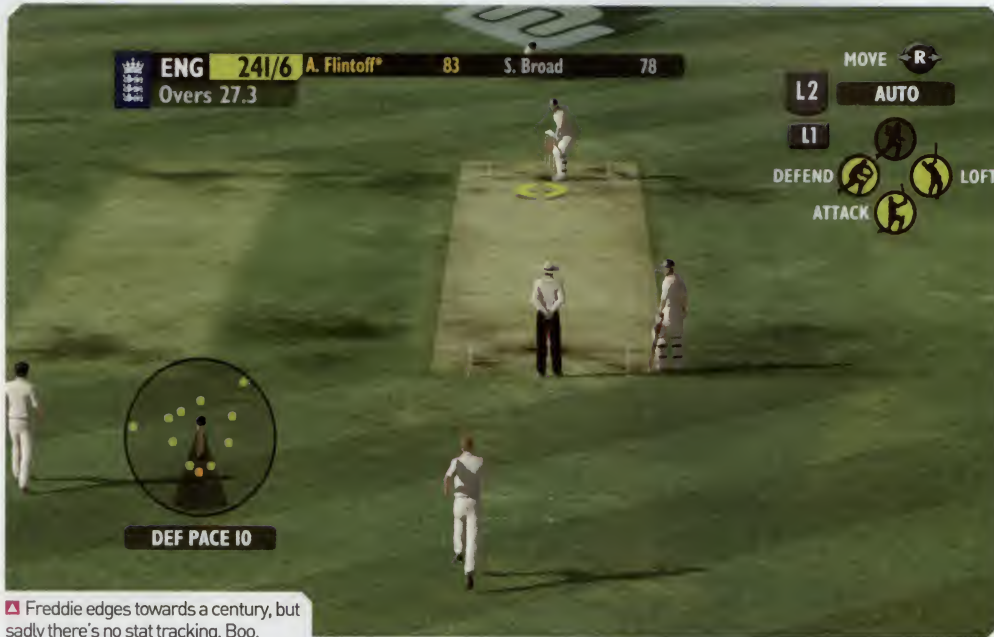
20/20s
Finally, a game gets this super-fast form of cricket right – and in some style, with lurid kits, giant hits, and high scores.

Hawkeye
Added depth comes from graphic displays to show things like ball-by-ball accuracy and where a batsman has scored runs. Ace.

LOVING

Unlock woes
No licences other than England and Oz? Fair enough, but come on now, don't make us earn the right to set the other teams straight!

HATING



▲ Freddie edges towards a century, but sadly there's no stat tracking. Boo.



▲ The bowling engine mimics MLB 09: The Show, but we'll forgive it seeing as it's so brilliantly done.



▲ Playing front foot shots is as simple as playing a standard stroke while holding the **L1** button.



▲ Replay angles are plentiful – perfect for reliving huge floodlit boundaries.

swinging and you'll give away cheap wickets; whereas in 20-20 matches there's more scope for going big from the off, Kev Pietersen style. 50-over games are the happy medium. Leave a few balls to get settled and you'll soon be walloping sixes all over the shop.

No cricket game before has had this level of success when differentiating between the three forms of cricket, but Ashes doesn't succeed merely because of its fantastic work with the bat. Atmosphere is also key. 20/20 games

teams have fake, but easily editable, names. So Sachin Tendulkar is Sumit Tenhukkar. No great problem there; the trouble is that to give these fakies their real kit you have to unlock it first, by breaking *world records*. So you need a score of over 400 to get a new bat, or 10/53 bowling stats for wicket keeper gloves. I'd love to tell you which manufacturers made these items but so far I've failed to unlock either; and so Sachin's stuck with genero-kit. Madness. An equally questionable decision is the

"20/20 games feature raucous crowds and teams in pyjamas."

feature raucous crowds, music between overs (the West Indian calypso borders on mesmerising), and, of course, teams in pyjamas. In contrast, test games feel serious and stuffy. Don't fret, though, if you don't fancy bowling 100-odd overs, you can sim an entire innings if you're only interested in one particular side of the game. It's another great touch.

Nasty edge

On the pitch, then, all is well. Indeed, this would push hard for a 9/10, even with a few questionable character likenesses (Freddie Flintoff could be any Lancastrian skinhead) were it not for two off-field mishaps. The first is the game's edit mode. Because Australia and England are the only licensed sides, players on the other ten national

one to omit any form of stat-tracking between matches. Hawkeye is used brilliantly throughout the game to track things like bowling delivery patterns and where a batsman's runs have been scored, yet once a match is over the stats die with it. Play an Ashes series and there's no way of knowing Freddie's total wicket count or Andrew Collingwood's batting average. That kind of thing is a massive part of cricket, and omitting it altogether is a significant oversight on the developer's part.

Still, it'd be wrong to get carried away with the criticism. Ultimately Ashes Cricket 2009 delivers where it matters most: on the field of play. And like the Caribbean genius who fronted this series for so long, it does so spectacularly.

Ben Wilson



ScorePole
Ashes comfortably installs itself as the best cricket game going, ahead of its now stale PS2 rivals.



it's ever been. Where previous games required you to select shots on the D-pad – so **↑+↗** would play a sweep when controlling a right-hander, for instance – now you simply press the stick in the direction you want to play the ball, along with **⊗** (standard shot), **⊙** (lofted shot), or **⊕** (defensive shot), after which everything is decided contextually. Press right and **⊙** on a long hop and your batsman aims an uppish hook on the leg side. Press **↵+↵** to the same delivery and he flails wildly at the ball, making an edge more likely. Timing, confidence and batsman ability also play into the outcome.

The great thing about this system is there's a real pleasure in building an innings by spotting gaps in the field on the HUD and punishing bad balls. Being able to direct defensive shots – and therefore going for quick singles – is also huge, particularly in limited over games where every run counts. But the greatest thing of all about the new system is the way it feels slightly different in each form of the game. Go into a test match wildly



Of the many reasons to love B1943, 'tank vs rocket launcher' is near the top.

Shooting star

Battlefield 1943

A small but perfectly formed war

You know you're onto a good thing when you can't pick a favourite moment to highlight a game's good points. Was it when the bomb landed on the guy in front of you, blowing his body skywards? Or where you watched planes fighting overhead, only for them to collide and the flaming wreckage come clattering down around you? Or how about the time you survived a direct hit from an air strike? Emerging deafened and shaken from the shattered, burning remains of a 'not as safe as you thought' bunker. Even without these moments, the shooting alone is brilliant – fast, twitchy run-and-gun battles across mountains or through bases.

Play with madness

The relentless and brilliant chaos of Battlefield 1943 constantly throws up moments like this. Things that seem like impressive set-pieces or orchestrated battles but are actually the result of players just messing around with what the game has to offer; throwing it all together and seeing what happens next.

Castlist

The heavy



Soldier

A heavy hitter who packs an ammo-chewing machine gun and rocket launcher.

The spook



Scout

Can hit people across the map with his sniper rifle and plant dynamite.

The all-rounder



Rifleman

Sports good range and accuracy, plus he carries lethal rifle grenades.

It starts simply, choosing from three classes: soldier, rifleman or scout. Such a small choice might seem stingy until you experiment with their secondary abilities, which open up more potential. The soldier, for example, comes with a machine gun as a primary weapon that's only useful close-up, but he also carries a rocket launcher, making him explosively dangerous at range. On the other hand, while the scout's sniper rifle is effective at distance, the dynamite he can drop makes it worth getting in close to set booby traps. Finally, the Rifleman has a good range but poor clip size, making up for it with propelled grenades that are deadly in a crowd. On top of that there are the vehicles – fast jeeps with heavy machine guns; rumbling tanks; planes, swirling through the air, chasing each other's tails or nose-diving the ground in order to drop bombs. It's a minimal mix that creates a surprising amount of variety.

One thing worthy of praise is the brilliant ammo system which, like your health, recharges. We never want to run

Info

Format PSN download **ETA** Out now
Pub EA **Dev** Dice **Players** 1-24
Web battlefield1943.com **It's** like Warhawk on a sun-drenched tropical island with canvas planes.

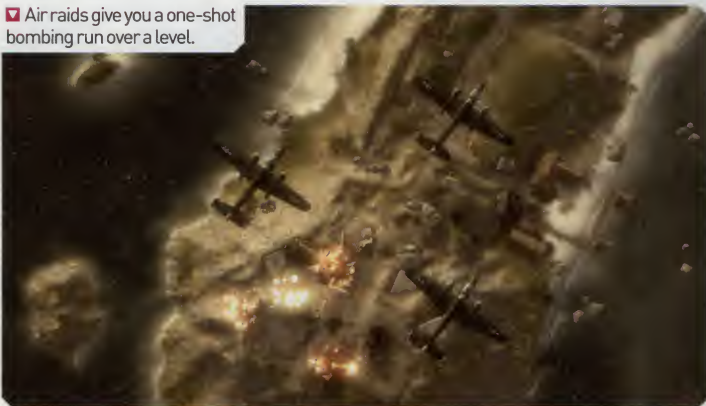
out of anything ever again. The only obvious fault is that the sniper rifle isn't a one-hit kill. And while there's an XP system that racks up points for capturing bases or making kills, it only progresses your rank – good for bragging rights, but you get nothing physical for it.

Drop it like it's hot

Then there are the air raids. At certain points, radar stations activate. Enter one and you can steer a squadron of bombers over the island, dropping a single massive payload on the poor suckers below. The game uses the same tech as Battlefield Bad Company, so you can blow everything to pieces, and air raids show this off best by turning entire swathes of the map into flaming rubble. Even a grenade can splinter trees or



✓ Tanks might look scary but a well-placed rocket will finish them.



✓ Air raids give you a one-shot bombing run over a level.

puncture walls. Thrilling and terrifying in equal measure, depending what side you're on.

What makes this so much fun is that it's instantly satisfying. Instead of scaling a learning curve, you're running from one thing to the next: planes one minute, then flak guns. Bored of laying explosive ambushes? Then go up high and snipe for a bit. Or grab a plane and take to the skies before jumping out and parachuting behind enemy lines.

Stand together

There's also loads of teamwork. Anything from giving people a lift to mixing classes for an assault – teammates using RPGs to destroy cover while you pepper exposed enemies with bullets. It's hard not to work together, with maps perfectly scaled to condense the action without cramping it. A lovely touch has one of your bases as an offshore battleship; you could take to the skies for a dogfight, but it's far more fun to get in a boat and drive to the island, friends giving cover from the onboard machine guns.



✓ Storming the beach in a boat is a thrill.

The only thing counting against all this is the overall size of the package. For £9.99 you only get three maps, which are all small identical tropical islands and one mode, Conquest, where you fight to control bases. Right now it's incredible fun, but how long will that last?

EA are obviously planning on extending the experience through updates, and how that's managed will be crucial to Battlefield 1943's ongoing success. If it's value for money, then this could become the best online game on PS3.

But if future expansions feel like they're designed just to pull the pennies from your wallet, then it could wring the fun out of it in an instant.

Leon Hurley



Straight to bargain bin

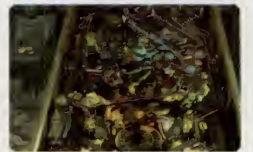
With Nathan Ditum



Is it okay to *really* enjoy **Red Baron Arcade**? Should I start eBaying for Prussian wartime memorabilia and framed pictures of Kaiser Wilhelm II? In my defence, the most graphic the game gets is having three-tiered balsawood fliers burst into flames like kites

flying too close to the sun, and it's also worth pointing out that this is World War 1, before the Germans went *really* bad. So that's fine. The game itself is fun for at least ten minutes. Barrel-rolling doesn't work properly – instead of moving you in real space it just spins your plane on the spot – and if you're far enough away from an aircraft that its pilot wouldn't hear you shouting, then you probably won't be able to tell which side it's on. On the plus side, my new leather flying trousers are really comfy.

Oh, cock off. I don't believe you. I simply don't believe you. No way did the ball ping off that rubber bouncy thing and slide down the massive undefended side-gutter *again*. It just doesn't happen that often. My big problem with **Zen Pinball** is that it bloody lies to me – if it was a person it would steal. The button response is a split



second too slow, which I could get used to if I wasn't constantly furious that THE BALL HAS GONE DOWN THE B*****D GUTTER AGAIN and every combination of rebounds and ricochets didn't end with me impotently whacking the flippers as I lose another life. What with tedious themed tables and grating sound effects, the only joy I got out of the game was the analogue spring ball launcher, which pulls the spring back further the harder you hold ⊗. Yeah, pretty special.



James Pond: Codename Robocod is like a fever dream of half-finished and stolen ideas prematurely birthed through someone's ear. Fish-as-Bond I'm pretty much on board with. The Robocop thing seems like a weird demographic-crossing stretch. And I'm

totally out when it comes to combining the speed-running legs of Sonic and the mystery boxes of Mario in a garish world of seasonal jingles and nightmare toy enemies (footballs with giant faces, walking white gloves, big table tennis bats). The backgrounds look like barely-designed wallpaper, and the levels stretch for ages and ages. It feels like a not-yet-complete hobbyist effort, rather than the quirky hit I believed it to be during my Mega Drive years. But back then I also believed in justice, democracy and the power of love, so I guess that things can change.

Abomination of the month

Given how much I hated **Little Britain: The Videogame** when it first came out, my

decision to dig up its rotting body via the PlayStation Store is probably quite a bad one. But it's not half as bad as the decision to put it on the Store on the first place. It's as near to actually broken as you can get without being in two pieces, with a difficulty setting so unbalanced that this time I didn't even bother getting past the first stupid depressing level, with gleaming slug-bodied Vicky Pollard skating through a park, which for some reason you need ninja reactions to complete (even on easy). Things I'd rather have seen on the Store instead of this include all other games ever made, my bank details and pictures of me falling over naked.



Two giant robots fighting in a sea of lo-res. Inevitably it's hella clunky.



Plotinus prime

Transformers Revenge Of The Fallen

They're profitable, so they're back

Movie tie-ins are almost always a massive sack of balls. Particularly when the game is rush-released alongside the film. So let's get to brass tacks: Revenge Of The Fallen isn't unplayably awful. The gameplay of the first Transformers licence is pretty much intact – there are Autobot and Decepticon campaigns, and it's instantly playable with fast-paced morphing action. Sadly, it also has the first game's crippling, rotten repetition.

You're introduced to your full set of attacks as early as the tutorial. Although you collect Energon to upgrade your team, none of the upgrades add new moves – they just make all those basic moves imperceptibly more powerful. Any sense of progress or improvement is mostly lost in the rising difficulty of the game. Bad start then.



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now
Pub Activision
Dev Luxoflux
Players 1-8 Web
Transformers game.com
It's like playing with toys that look like Transformers but feel more like the cheap-choice Gobots.

And things get worse. Whatever the mission type, the action is fundamentally the same: the plodding slaughter of a barely changing enemy. Bonus objectives are trivial, and frequently unrelated to the missions – objectives such as 'kill five opponents with melee attacks' seem unwilling to add anything interesting or challenging to the template.

Show your mettle

On the up side, the levels where you play Breakaway and Grindor – the Autobot and Decepticon flying units – are distinct, difficult, and a relief. But there's a yawning chasm between these moments, and the tiresome labour of the other missions.

The two sets of 23 missions are short (some can theoretically be completed in under two minutes), the 14 maps are small, and although there's some satisfaction in the way the events of the separate Autobot and Decepticon campaigns overlap, more often it just feels cheap that some are direct mirror-images of each other.



The character models look intricate and pretty, but move like fat kids with polio braces.



Decepticon and Autobot campaigns are playable. They're both pretty samey and dull.



Autobots: fix the sensor arrays. Decepticons: sabotage the sensor arrays. See what you did there.

Complete all the missions in an area, and you unlock Free Ride mode. This is so bizarrely pointless that the whole thing becomes comically absurd. Free Ride lets you drive around the maps with no enemies, objectives or collectibles. At my most charitable, I'd say that it lets you research the nuances of a map for multiplayer mode, but the maps have no nuance. It's so obviously something that was approved simply because it was no extra work – you almost have to tip your hat in grudging respect.

The multiplayer is a vanilla online experience – deathmatch, capture the flag, and point capture – and rounds off a miserably unambitious, box-ticking experience. Given the money that powers the movie tie-in treadmill, it's

basically madness to expect anything else. But that doesn't mean we have to be happy about it. Stop buying this crap and eventually they'll either cease making it, or make it better. **Jon Blyth**

What you do in... Transformers





Beta beater

Street Fighter Alpha 2

So there's this bloke called Ryu, right...

First, the bad news. If you're expecting this downloadable PS1 classic to live up to the cloud-bothering heights of Street Fighter IV, or even the original Street Fighter II, then you're going to be disappointed. The cast list retains just seven SFII originals, making room for the likes of Guile's doomed best friend Charlie and Final Fight alumni Rolento. And the game's once innovative features like air blocking (self explanatory) and custom combos (build up an onscreen bar, then press three attack buttons to hammer your opponent) feel underpolished in comparison to the super-slick ideas at play in SFIV.

Taking the pee

Alpha 2 is flawed, then, but to write it off for the above criticisms would be harsh like a flaming dragon punch to the backside. Because although it feels unloved in places, this is still a fun, deep brawler, which throws up meaty battles time after time. It's also held up well visually – all lovely jumbo 2D sprites and finely detailed backgrounds, as you'd expect from a game bearing the Street Fighter name. The classic characters like Ryu, Chunners and Bison feel instantly familiar, and there's a pleasure to

Info

Format: PSN download **ETA** Sep
Pub: Capcom Dev: Capcom
Players: 1-2 Web: streetfighter.com
It's like Going on a weird date with a young Chun Li.



▲ Hadouken! For a game that's 13 years old, the visuals have held up amazingly well.

mastering the ones you might not already know – even if the lone English participant, a mohawked former pub bouncer called Birdie, calls a London Underground toilet his home. Did Capcom have an influx of Scots in on work experience during the summer of '95?

At press time the UK price hadn't been confirmed, but it's \$5.99 on the US Store, which suggests you'll only have to pay around four quid for it when it lands here. Whether you're a Street Fighter completist, a curious

retro fan, or just someone who likes analysing the number of pixels that have gone into creating a virtual urinal (I stopped counting at, um, seven), it's a steal. **Ben Wilson**



BluMovies

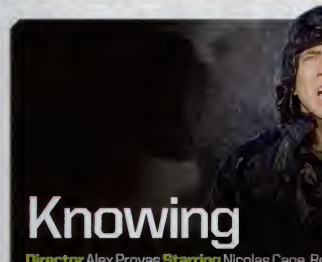
HD films to feed your next-gen disc player



Brick

Director Rian Johnson **Starring** Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Nora Zehetner **ETA** Out now

Unexpectedly brilliant high school mystery, which steals the hard-boiled patter of the meanest noir thrillers and plays it dead straight. The result takes some adjustment, but will reel you in to a tough, lurid world of cheerleader molls, jock muscle and nerd kingpins.



Knowing

Director Alex Proyas **Starring** Nicolas Cage, Rose Byrne **ETA** Out now

This loony disaster sci-fi is like making out with a pretty but monstrously stupid girl: fun, if you can get past the fact it keeps saying stuff that doesn't make sense. Nic Cage finds a numbers-map of big accidents which – GASP – runs out really soon. What happens next?



Duplicity

Director Tony Gilroy **Starring** Clive Owen, Julia Roberts **ETA** Out now

Smart-mouthed spy flick with pretty folk Owen and Roberts. Despite the apparently tough and topical subject matter – corrupt banks! – it's basically fluff. But superior fluff, thanks to Owen's trademark glare and Roberts' everything.



Movie of the month Watchmen

Director Zack Snyder **Starring** Billy Crudup, Malin Akerman **ETA** Out now

Get over the borked alien squid ending and this is about as faithful a rendition as the comic fanboys could ever have hoped for. The visuals absolutely pop, the politics are intact and Doc Manhattan steals the show as the literally blue-balled god among mortals.



Head
to
head

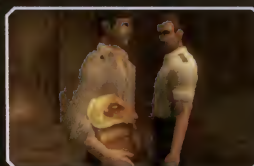
Ghostbusters **vs** Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings

Phantoms take on fedoras in the battle of the PS2 movie tie-ins

It's two years after Ghostbusters 2, and you're a rookie Buster, shadowing the team as they clear New York of all things spooky, and battling fan favourites like Stay Puft.



STORY

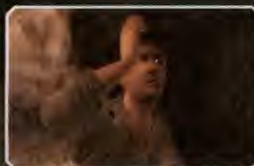


The action archaeologist hops between deserts, jungles and San Francisco looking for the Staff Of Moses, punching any pesky Nazis that he meets along the way.

The framerate might suffer the odd stutter, but caricaturing the famous cast not only gives a friendly cartoon feel, it also cunningly disguises PS2's visual limitations.



GRAPHICS



The environments look suitably ruined and detailed, but there's no getting away from the fact that it looks as though Indy's face has been carved out of a mangy old potato.

It's missing co-op, but stalking spooks with the PKE meter and destroying everything with your proton pack make for solid, satisfying action, perked up with some nostalgia sauce.

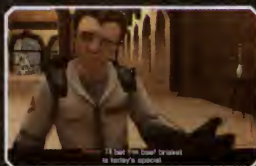


GAMEPLAY



Even all the whipping, brawling, running around airships and setting fire to things can't hide how linear the action is. You're not so much exploring as strolling along a pretty corridor.

Ramis and Aykroyd's script makes all the difference – creeping around corners looking for angry sous chef ghosts is just better with Peter Venkman's sarcastic commentary.



LAUGHS



The whip helps vary the punch-ups – you can pull bits of the environment down onto enemy goons – but the game misses out on the crucial tongue-in-cheek humour.

WINNER

It niggles a little knowing you're missing the fancy visuals of the PS3 version, but if you've only got a PS2, the decent script and original cast won't disappoint.



7

LOSER

Decent-enough looking action by numbers, but it all feels a little soulless, especially next to its star-studded, spooky rival. If Spielberg even looked at this, we'll eat our snake.



5



VERDICT

Bejeweled 2

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub SOE



Old-school puzzle game with a weird galactic theme. Victory is a matter of swapping coloured gems around your virtual board to create rows of three or more matching colours, which then disappear. Get clever and you can rack up satisfying chain reactions, bonuses and Trophies along the way, using exploding stones (bang!) and hype gems, which wipe out an entire colour in an instant. Which is way more satisfying than it sounds. There's a puzzle mode, which tickles the old grey matter by making you clear gems in a set pattern, but



the fun is at its best in the timed action mode, which heaps on the pressure for competitive types. Instant addiction and replay value make the £7 asking price justified, plus the backgrounds look like sci-fi paperback covers from 1972, which is a brilliant space nerd bonus. **Rachel Penny**



Numblast

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Sony



Pared-down number puzzler with some bizarre anime frills. The long and short of it: a pair of university students are investigating special blocks when one of them gets turned into a monkey. Which is bad, right? So to change him back you have to shuffle numbered squares about to create matching two-by-two grids. When matched, these grids explode, upping the number written on each square by one (unless it's a four, then it cycles round to one) and opening up



the potential for chain reactions which can, if you flick around the grid like a savant hummingbird, take out the entire screen in one go. It's really hard, probably too quirky, and not much fun unless you're really into maths. **Nathan Ditum**

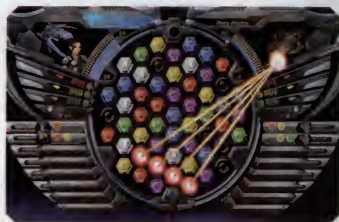


Puzzle Quest Galactrix

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub D3



Wait, £16. £16! I'd have happily raved about this clever Bejeweled-style puzzler were it not for its utterly outrageous price. It uses RPG elements – missions, levelling up, inventories – to tie all the otherwise standard gem-swapping together into an unusually snazzy sci-fi-flavoured package. Everything from mining for resources to beating the crap out of space pirates is controlled by matching coloured gems, and even though it's just



window dressing, it's still super. But £16? It's way too much for a PC port puzzle game. Save your cash and go for Bejeweled 2 instead. No hilarious galactic robots, but half the price. **Rachel Penny**



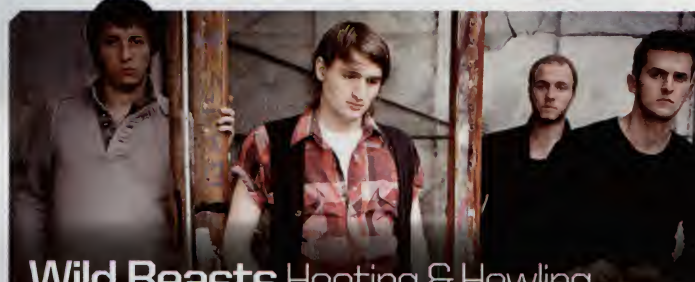
PlayList

Essential tunes to download this month

Frankmusik Complete Me

Format Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Former BMX rider, beatboxer and London fashion student Vincent Frank packed it all in to become a pop star. Seems he made the right decision, because not only does this debut album boast 13 songs of polished electro-pop with big hooks and experimental ingenuity, he's going out with Holly Valance too. myspace.com/frankmusik



Wild Beasts Hooting & Howling

Format Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

Wild Beasts might look like effeminate dandies, but don't be fooled – new single Hooting & Howling is a tale of very ungentlemanly fisticuffs on the streets of broken Britain, vocalist Hayden Thorpe singing, "We're just brutes, looking for shops to loot," in his trembling falsetto over jangling guitars and disco drums. myspace.com/wildbeasts



Mos Def The Ecstatic

Format Album ETA 24 Aug Price £7.99

After years of putting acting before hip-hopping it's a surprise to find Mos Def back on form with The Ecstatic, spitting sharp rhymes like he's never been away. Add some of the best producers from the underground (Madlib, J Dilla) and this might be his best since '99's Black On Both Sides.

myspace.com/mosdef



Download of the month Fever Ray Triangle Walks

Format Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

This first album from Karin Dreijer Andersson – of mask-clad Swedish duo The Knife – is one of the year's slow burners, and it doesn't get much better than Triangle Walks. Eerie electronic pop that somehow brings to mind oriental gardens and swinging wind chimes – it's unsettling, strangely beautiful, and highly recommended. myspace.com/feverray



▼ Casting spells is just a case of wiggling your analogue stick.



▲ Feel free to insert your own joke about big broomsticks and chambers of secrets.



▲ Duelling is a big part of the Hogwarts life, but a disembowel spell is sadly missing.

Teenage tricks

Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince



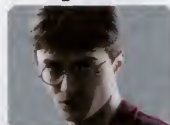
Magical adventuring in Specsavers facewear

Dig out your Gryffindor pyjamas and that wand you made out of tinfoil. This, Potter fans, is your time. It might seem obvious (not to mention a massive cliché) but this really is one for people who know exactly where to stick their knuts. And yes, it's yet another tidy package aimed at tiny muggles, but it just happens to be a cracking game too.

98% of this somewhat linear adventure places you in Potter's shoes, doing one of three things to advance the storyline: potion-making, duelling or playing Quidditch. Brewing everything from polyjuice to punch is like going mental in a science lab, throwing ingredients into a cauldron, shaking, stirring, boiling, wafting away the smoke when it inevitably goes wrong. It's more enjoyable than it sounds, like *Cooking Mama* but with more rat guts. Duelling is similarly simple: you and another wizard trade fireballs and dodges until one of you collapses in a non-fatal heap. It's the worst of your duties as the specy boy wonder, purely because of the limited number of spells. Best by far are the Quidditch matches, navigating through glowing stars on your broom to catch the golden snitch. It's essentially a checkpoint

Castlist

Harry



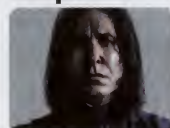
Daniel Radcliffe
Famed for his role as the boy wizard and getting his wand out on stage.

Hermione



Emma Watson
She's officially 19 now, so all those feelings are entirely legal.

Snape



Alan Rickman
Take a proper RADA actor, add a terrible wig and presto! Instant baddie.

race, but it's a cunning way of making you feel like a champion seeker without having to explain the Quidditch equivalent of the offside rule. And when you finish the game you can still linger around Hogwarts, thanks to the extra curricular clubs where you can duel, fly and mix potions to your heart's content. If you really want to extend your stay there are also Hogwarts crests to collect, unlocking rewards like extra health and new characters for the (sadly mediocre) two-player duelling mode.

Wingardium leviosa

As you wander you're free to repair, levitate or set fire to objects with a few flicks of the left analogue stick. Sadly, you can only lock onto specific targets, which entirely foiled my plan to unleash a fiery genocide on Slytherin. Now and again you get a special little puzzle, like lighting fireworks or fending off corpses (yeah, it's a slightly darker story this time) but they're rare. Not that you'll care much. Everything is cleverly interspersed with quality cut-scenes that give the feel

Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub EA Dev EA Players 1-2 Web harrypotterea.com It's like going back to school without having to worry about being arrested.

of a complex adventure. You barely even notice you're essentially repeating the same three mini-games, as you're too busy worrying what the Death Eaters are up to. It's a big help that it looks great, from the moving staircases and great halls of Hogwarts to the spot on character likenesses. It's also deep enough into the uncanny valley to help stave off those inappropriate thoughts about Emma Watson. Phew.

The main story covers all the major plot points but the game is over in a matter of hours. You might argue that it's all a bit easy, but remember this is an adventure aimed at people who fancy Ron Weasley, rather than hardened *Call Of Duty 4* players. Personally, I'm both, so if you'll excuse me, I'm late for potions club. **Rachel Penny**



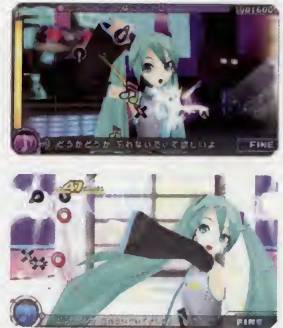
JapanWatch

This month's overseas action in a nutshell

Hatsune Miku Project Diva

Format PSP Pub Sega Subtitles No

Rhythm action games are old like God's jokes. But creating one purely as a vehicle for one of the 'faces' of Yamaha's Vocaloid brand of singing synthesiser applications does add a certain post-modern novelty. Kind of like playing a game starring Microsoft Word's Clippit assistant, and about as appealing.



Arcobaleno!

Format PS2 Pub Idea Factory Subtitles No

Bravely weaving the themes of temporary childhood homelessness with lost love and fine Italian cuisine, this dating sim sees former street urchin Yuna recognising the cooking of the chef whose binned seafood pasta saved her life years before. From this unlikely realisation flows a sauce-slathered tale of infatuation, antipasti, and interminable stretches of multiple-choice flirtation.



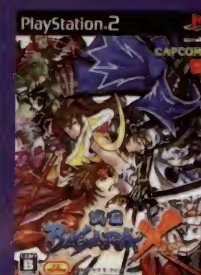
Melty Blood Actress Again

Format PS2 Pub Ecole Subtitles No

Originally spun off a visual novel (read: Japan-only plot-'n'-perv game' with occasional button stabs the only interaction) Melty Blood has developed into a tightly coiled beat-'em-up series favoured by hardcore frame counters. Discussing Actress Again's innovations to an oblivious UK audience seems pointless, but fans of gibberish game titles will be over the moon.



Exotic Boxart Of The Month



Sengoku Basara X
This is what happens when you design boxart by lining random bits of character art and weaponry out of a circus cannon at a window.



DC II PS: Da Capo II Plus Situation
I know what you're thinking - what on Earth do they keep in that briefcase? My guess? Hair scrunchies and pepper spray.



Rosario to Vampire Capu 2: Koi to Yume no Kyousoukyoku
Blue hair, headphones and ribbons? Fine. But what is that dead animal hat thing top-right?



Ballsy puzzler

Zuma

Froggin' hell - it's the best puzzler on PSN

Of all the bright, playable puzzlers that have hit the store in recent weeks (three of which are reviewed on page 107), this is the best. Yes, it's been around for a while (originally released on PC in 2003 and then on Xbox Live in 2005), and yes, it has you controlling a giant stone frog regurgitating coloured balls in some kind of ancient Incan temple for a reason that's never explained. But it's playable, skilful and beautifully enraging like nothing else on PSN, and well worth a punt, even at £6.99.

Frog march

It helps that the setup is a little different from the deluge of grid-based puzzlers out there. Instead, your fat froggie is sat centre-screen, on a revolving disc. Snaking around him is a track leading to a scary golden skull. The track layout is different with each new level, getting more intricate (with hidden sections and criss-crossing overpasses) the further you progress. Coloured balls travel along the track, slowly inching their way towards the skull. When they reach it, it's game over, so it's your job to spin your frog and fire new balls into the track, matching up sets of three which then explode.

It's a game of accuracy, planning and, when the queue of balls near the skull and the panicky music sets in, pure reflexes. After the gentle

Info
Format PSN download ETA
Out now Pub SDE Dev Popcap
Players 1 Web popcap.com/
games/zuma It's like Playing
marbles in an ancient ruin with
a giant frog.



Once hooked, it's not unusual to realise you haven't blinked for several minutes.

first few levels it's all about making every ball count - each one has to nestle in line next to a matching colour, ready to be despatched, or you're cooked. New balls stop flowing in when you score enough points to fill the red bar at the top of the screen, so racking up chains and hitting 'gap shots' (matching sets through gaps you've made in the track) is key, as is looking out for power-ups (slow-down, reverse, explosion and accuracy balls).

The game is small - just nine original levels, replayed three times with a new set of colours

added to up the difficulty - but finishing it is a dry-eyed, thumb-cramping mix of agony and ecstasy. Best giant stone frog puzzler ever, ever, ever.

Nathan Ditum



Pure dynamite

Bomberman Ultra

Little firestarters make for big fun

Some classic games series require constant reinvention to stay fresh. ("Hello Need For Speed! Meet your new best friend, Tony Hawk's.") But the opposite is true of trusty old favourite Bomberman, to the point that every time a new game sporting its moniker arrives we panic internally that it'll have been meddled with and, therefore, broken. So it's with genuine relief we tell you that Ultra is just

✓ Eight-man multiplayer is crazy exciting and fast.



like all the B-man games that have gone before it. Specifically: loud, fast, bright, and disgustingly moreish.

Bring the boom

For those of you ignorant to its charms, the premise sees you moving around a top-down, maze-like square battlefield, collecting power-ups and dropping explosives until you're the last bomberman standing. Or, more often, until an opponent (you can have up to seven – online, locally, or AI-controlled) blasts your character to kingdom come and you surprise yourself with just how many f-words you can fit into one sentence. (My record: 22. Probably shouldn't mention that I was playing the wife.)

Developer Hudson Soft has chucked in a whole number of customisation options, enabling you to personalise

your little arsonist (mine's a cute yet psychotic emo kid) and toggle every power-up in the game on or off. They're welcome adds, but it's the highly charged, competitive gameplay – particularly supremely frenetic eight-way online battles – that keeps you coming back. If you win, you play again because the tang of victory is deee-licious. And if you lose, then the little men inside your brain named Mr Competitive and Dr Revenge nod at one another, bust out the endorphins, and tell you that you won't be leaving the sofa tonight until that little [expletive deleted] pink bomber has been decimated until his [expletive deleted]

disappears up his [expletive deleted]. At least ten times.

And that, friends, is why: a) Bomberman must never ever change, and b) You must download this now.

Ben Wilson

Info
Format PSN download
ETA Sep **Pub** Hudson Soft
Dev Hudson Soft **Players** 1-7
It's like This generation's answer to the big bang theory.



Six-string selection

Guitar Hero Greatest Hits

Rejected subtitle: some killer, a moderate amount of filler

Any Greatest Hits compilation is going to include a handful of omissions that'll make purists gnash their teeth. To make things tougher for GH, it's no longer a case of picking the songs that everyone liked in previous games – the whole point is that each tune's been retooled to work with bass, drums and a mic, so previously great songs (Edgar Winter's *Frankenstein*, say) don't qualify. Weirder still is that the song selection seems to have been put together by picking names out of a hat.

Set list setback

To be fair, some songs are better for it. Heart-Shape'd Box, a repetitive dirge when you're playing solo, perks up when you've got a Cobain wannabe on vocals, and Shout At The Devil improves massively with a full band. And if the guitar's the star, it's not surprising that Freebird, Psychobilly Freakout and Through The Fire And The

Info
Format PS3 **ETA** Out now
Pub Activision **Dev** Beenox
Players 1-4 **Web** snipurl.com/13y5r
It's like Buying a Best Of Carl Douglas that turns out not to have Kung Fu Fighting on it.

Flames have made the cut, even though their appeal is fretboard noodling rather than inspired lyricism. But in other places the gaps are either insane, or paint a chilling picture of what it must be like to go up against EA's lawyers. When You Were Young is out, Sweet Child O' Mine is gone and the only Aerosmith entry is the never-requested Back In The Saddle. Things that appeared in Rock Band have been stripped away, so you're left with a guitar-heavy game that's short on crowd-pleasers. There are improvements to the interface, but you're left with a Greatest Hits album that's more like a collection of vintage B-sides. **Joel Snape**

✓ Flowing locks? Check. Flares? Check. Massive boots? Check...



VIDEOGAME CULTURE

EDGE

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**HEAVY
RAIN**

THE TRUTH BEHIND
PS3'S ADULT
THRILLER

RAGE

**THE KILLER OPEN-WORLD FPS
FROM THE MASTERS OF DOOM**

**THE RACE TOWARDS THE NEXT
GENERATION OF GAME GRAPHICS**

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ON SET WITH THE SYNTAX ERA**

**INSIDE KODU, XBOX 360'S
DIY GAME-MAKING TOOL**

ISSUE 205 ON SALE NOW



Fallen monarch

The King Of Fighters XII

SNK's pretty boy takes a beating

King Of Fighters: that's the one where the sprites look like they were drawn in the '80s and haven't changed for the last ten years, right? *Wrong*, smart arse. For the 12th edition of SNK's much-loved (in Japan anyway) scrapper, everything's been lovingly redrawn – from little details like Fatal Fury figurehead Terry Bogard's iconic cap to the extravagantly decorated


arenas, which feature everything from adorable pandas to terrifyingly obese tourists. Guilty Gear X is no longer the prettiest 2D game around (in case you were keeping score).

Half cut

Unfortunately, this graphical splendour has come at a price. The roster has been slashed to 20 – about half the usual number – and even long-standing KOF lovers will be put off by some surprising, confusing tweaks to the fighting system. Though the basic dynamics are unchanged, much of the teamplay – a focal point of previous games – has been scuppered, making for less tactical battles. Also, a new critical counter system enables you to land a dozen free shots and a special move if you can temporarily daze your opponent with a close-range punch. It's a likeable idea that looks lovely,



▲ If we could set people on fire by punching them, we'd do it all the time.



Info
Format PS3 ETA 28 Aug
Pub Ignition Dev SNK Players
1-2 Web kingoffighters12.com
It's like Hayao 'Spirited Away'
Miyazaki has been given a go
at designing a beat-'em-up.

but it reduces fights to seeing who can memorise the longest combo, rather than the elegant games of rock-paper-roundhouse they were previously.

The brawling itself is still solid, and the evasive rolls give it a very different feel from Street Fighter. But ultimately, with the enormous amount of moves every beat-'em-up requires these days, you're unlikely to want to bother with more than

one. And when you can punch

Sagat's face off in spectacular not-quite-3D, you'd have to be desperately in love with hand-drawn graphics to care about the Bogard family's antics. **Joel Snape**



Gunstar Heroes

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Sega

Christ, games used to be hard. Sega's side-scrolling shooter Gunstar Heroes isn't impossible, but it is stubborn in an old-school way that'll have you playing through dozens of times, memorising boss attack patterns on your way to completion. Content-wise, it's not actually that long – a total of seven levels – but with right-angled learning curves and smart variations on 'whack fire as fast as possible' gameplay (including the ability to throw enemies and travel on ceilings and diagonal surfaces) it's way more engaging than its age might suggest. The big-pixel graphics look sparkly in HD, and crucially for massive babies like us, there

are some easy Trophies to be had. £3.99? Get involved.
Nathan Ditum



Heavy Weapon

Format PSN download ETA Sep Pub Sony

Heavy Weapon plays like a retro game – something classic with a cartoonish, Cannon Fodder-style approach to the actually pretty terrifying prospect of full-scale nuclear war – but is in fact a cheap and cheerful arcade shooter from just a couple of years back. The setup is simple like a brick to the head: naughty communists are invading, and you've got to drive your teeny atomic tank through waves of ground and air attacks using just the analog sticks (one to move and one to shoot) and **LB** to drop screen-busting nukes. Four-way co-op makes things epileptically hectic, but doesn't stop it all feeling the same after three or

four levels of eye-drying storms of bullets and missiles. **Nathan Ditum**

MLB 09 The Show

Format PSP ETA US import Pub Sony

The fiddly nub makes pitching awkward in this handheld round of fully licensed baseball, but Home Run Derby – a mini-game unavailable on the excellent PS3 version – is a supremely addictive timewaster that fits PSP perfectly.

7 Ben Wilson

Buzz! Jr Jungle Party

Format PSN ETA Out now Pub Sony

Collection of 40-odd mini-games that make use of the Buzz! controllers, in which the stars are bright, colourful primates. Built for the youngsters, yet packed with adult hilarity too. Unless you're too stuffy to laugh at farting monkeys. Grandad.

7 Ben Wilson



The Punisher No Mercy

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Zen



This isn't the derivative Unreal Tournament III clone it initially seems. Yes, it's powered by the Unreal engine and so adopts its trademark chunky, glimmering visuals. And it's also almost entirely multiplayer-focused – for all its flashy comic strip cut-scenes, the story mode boils down to you and a bunch of bots slugging it out in a variety of grim industrial arenas. But play the game against real people and it comes to life. The aiming is pure twitch, making for light, fast play with plenty of respawns, power-ups and upgrades. It's not quite fully-fledged, but it's definitely

playable, and respectable value at a penny under seven quid. **Nathan Ditum**



Forest slump

Topatoi

Platforming in a drunken hover buggy

When your whole game is built around a mystifyingly unintuitive control mechanic, you're pretty much screwed from the outset. And while Topatoi is far from a complete failure, it's hard to get over the fact you're forced to plough through this rudimentary 3D platformer in a hovering vehicle that handles like a burning unicycle.

It's called a Gyroscopic Exploration Multidimensional Multiterrain Apparatus – it does double jumps, has a tractor beam to pull objects, and is utterly pointless. Why can't lead character Raph just run around? It's needless, gratuitous over-confection.

Treehouse tedium

Apart from that, Topatoi lives in familiar platforming territory. You've crashlanded on a strange forest planet and must leap over chasms, operate doors and navigate moving platforms until you get to the other end. There are lots of physics-based puzzles – moving wooden blocks, activating pressure pads, opening doors – but often the set-piece conundrums are wilfully obscure rather than challenging, thanks to poor sign-posting and some wonky design. Once or twice I managed to get Raph inescapably trapped by landing in the wrong place – a massive level-building no-no.

Info

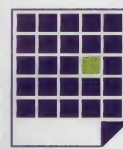
Format PSN download
ETA Out now **Pub Sony Dev**
Boo!at Games **Players 1**
Website topatoi.booolat.com
It's like Crash Bandicoot with a leg missing.



▲ The planet you land on is like the Ewok moon of Endor, full of massive treehouses.

If you yearn for the 'good' old days of Crash and Spyro, and re-starting a sequence for the 16th time because you keep mistiming a jump is your idea of a Saturday afternoon well spent, then Topatoi's bright visuals and dozy puzzles might be worth the £6.99 tag. But anyone who expects full, logical control over their

lead character should give it a wide berth. (But not too wide, obviously, otherwise you'll drop off the platform and have to re-start...) **Keith Stuart**

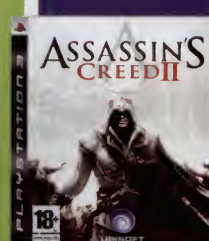


Release Schedule

Coming soon to a PlayStation near you

	Publisher	ETA	Format
GI Joe: The Rise Of Cobra	EA	7 Aug	Multi
Ashes Cricket 2009	Codemasters	7 Aug	PS3
Madden NFL 10	EA	14 Aug	Multi
Wolfenstein	Activision	14 Aug	PS3
Batman: Arkham Asylum	Eidos	28 Aug	PS3
Cross Edge	Tecmo Koei	28 Aug	PS3
King Of Fighters XII	Ignition	28 Aug	PS3
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	Square Enix	4 Sep	PSP
The Beatles: Rock Band	EA	9 Sep	PS3
Need For Speed Shift	EA	18 Sep	PS3
The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	18 Sep	Multi
Ninja Gaiden Sigma II	Tecmo Koei	25 Sep	PS3
Colin McRae Dirt 2	Codemasters	Sep	PS3
Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs	Ubisoft	Sep	PS3/PSP
Katamari Forever	Namco Bandai	Sep	PS3
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	Sep	PS3
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	Codemasters	Sep	PS3
Gran Turismo	Sony	2 Oct	PSP
Brutal Legend	EA	16 Oct	PS3
Borderlands	Take Two	Oct	PS3
Dark Void	Capcom	Oct	PS3
F12009	Codemasters	Oct	PSP
FIFA 10	EA	Oct	Multi
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	Sony	Oct	PS2/PSP
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	Sony	Oct	PS3
Modern Warfare 2	Activision	10 Nov	PS3
Assassin's Creed II	Ubisoft	20 Nov	PS3
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	Ubisoft	Nov	PSP
Lego Indiana Jones 2	LucasArts	Nov	PS3
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	Sony	Nov	PS3
SingStar Motown	Sony	Nov	PS3
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2010	THQ	Nov	PS3
Avatar	Ubisoft	Dec	PS3
Battlefield Bad Company 2	EA	Dec	PS3
Gran Turismo 5	Sony	Dec	PS3
White Knight Chronicles	Sony	Dec	PS3
Brink	Bethesda	10 Mar	PS3
God Of War III	Sony	10 Mar	PS3
Dead To Rights: Retribution	Namco Bandai	2010	PS3
Final Fantasy XIII	Square Enix	2010	PS3
Just Cause 2	Eidos	2010	PS3
Heavy Rain	Sony	2010	PS3
Singularity	Activision	2010	PS3

! All release dates are accurate at time of press but liable to change.



READY MADE EXCUSE #34

Pull a sickie for... Assassin's Creed II

“The machine was called 'Zoltar Speaks'. I just wanted to be a little bit bigger, but woke up an old man. With incontinence. True story.”

”



▲ Forget wussy old Capture The Flag – how about ‘completely annihilate the building’ for a game mode?

114

Home wrecker

Red Faction Guerrilla

An entire planet's worth of extreme makeovers



Info

Format PS3 **ETA**
Out now **Pub** THQ
Dev Volition Inc.
Players 1-16 **Web**
redfaction.com **It's**
like Visiting a model
city with a hammer
and purposeful grin.

Dropping a house on your enemy really does feel like victory. Shooting them is fine. Blowing them up is okay. Dropping a Martian apartment block on them, however – *that's* the real win, and Guerrilla's destructible buildings definitely add a certain something to Red Faction's otherwise competent third-person online modes. It's not the first time it's been done. Battlefield Bad Company used its destruct-o-tech voodoo online to great effect, making buildings and trees disappear in huge ear-ringing explosions mid-match. Here it feels a

little less organic – fragile buildings and structures standing out clearly from the inert bedrock of the levels. Unlike Bad Company, this makes more effort to integrate demolition into the gameplay with modes like Damage Control, Siege and Demolition built around smashing stuff the hell up.

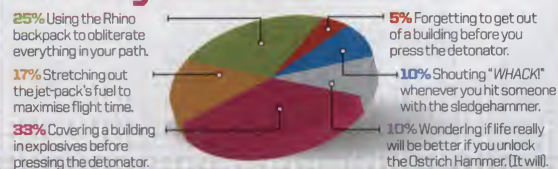
Hammer time

Siege, for example, has you attacking or defending key structures. If you're on the offence then it's a case of using whatever weapon you have to hand to level buildings, chimney stacks and other constructions. RPGs and explosives are best, but failing that you can also swing your sledgehammer to take out load-bearing walls. It takes a bit longer but it's far more satisfying when a building, teetering on one crumbling pillar, finally groans and gives in, collapsing into rubble. The hammer also makes an evil melee

weapon, with one good whack sending broken bodies skittering across the floor. On the other side of the battle, the defensive team get the Reconstructor, a magic repair gun that rebuilds things with a cloud of nanomachines. This push and pull of teams trying to save or destroy structures can create some interesting battles. Especially when you get carried away, smashing up pillars, only to find the opposition around the corner, repairing your efforts.

Demolition is another destruction-based mode where teams take turns to tear down and protect buildings. This time only the 'Destroyer' on the offensive team can score points by wrecking stuff, forcing the other team to focus all their efforts on bringing them down. It's an interesting twist on a 'Protect the VIP'-style objective, only spoiled by the fact that a new Destroyer is constantly respawned over a certain time period so the defending team

What you do in... Red Faction





Ability-boosting backpacks add strategy to the action.



Use a Rhino backpack to smash through walls when you can't be bothered to go around.

doesn't benefit greatly from successfully whacking them. Other modes include Damage Control, where you fight to secure control points, and the more traditional CTF and deathmatch.

One interesting idea is that instead of perks you use backpacks to boost abilities. Different packs have different effects, enhancing skills such as speed or healing, or giving you whole new powers. Jet-packs, for example, let you fly small distances, while Tremor packs create small earthquakes that can topple buildings, and Rhino packs enable you to smash through walls like Juggernaut from the X-Men with a powerful dash forwards. Used tactically these can make a huge difference to the action. The only downside to the packs is that there's no real skill progression beyond picking one up. You collect XP as you play but the rewards are purely cosmetic, unlocking decorative badges, skins and different shaped hammers.

There's something hugely enjoyable about being able to flick the finger at architecture. The novelty of bringing down buildings or smashing through walls never quite wears off. It's a shame that there aren't more destructible elements to up the risk, though. Structures are generally small, and as a result the combat is always focused outdoors. Our vote for any DLC would be a few maps that make you fight inside more, letting you smash between rooms or shoot out floors and ceilings.

Online smasher

In the end, the online combat isn't deep, but it's fast and quick-rush rewarding enough to carry the multiplayer, even without the outrageous destructibility that the offline game leans on. It's not a

reason to get Red Faction:

Guerrilla on its own, but it's definitely another good reason to buy the whole package if you still needed convincing.

Leon Hurley



Online round-up

With Leon Hurley



My favourite thing in **Battlefield Bad Company** isn't the destruction, it's sneaking off into the edges of the map and trying to pull off the hardest sniper shots I can. On the larger levels bullets can take a second or two to reach the other side and you're often

shooting at tiny dots moving on the screen. Get it right, though, and my God is it thrilling. The trick is to track the target, moving ahead of them so that when you squeeze off a shot it curves through the air to meet them. There's something oddly meditative about patiently waiting for the exact right moment. Like fishing, only with headshots. That sounds fine, right? It won't read weird out of context...?

"STOP SHOUTING! The headset's breaking up, I'm sorry, okay. This is **Resident Evil 5**, he's a big man with a chainsaw – what did you expect would happen if you stood there... Why were you reloading the rifle anyway? That's the worst gun to... I've got the machine gun ammo because you wanted all the first aid which, I might add, you weren't spraying my way when the crazies were chewing my cheeks off. If you'd thought of that I might have been able to help instead of limping along with no health. Did you think of that? No. No, you just set up the inventory to suit yourself and now you're all angry because your head got sawn off. Don't you dare disconnect on me! Co-op was your idea... Hello...?"

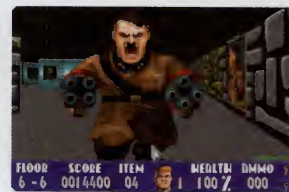


Initially I thought **Bionic Commando** wasn't great online. A slow third-person shooter with meh weapons and small maps. That was until I started using the bionic arm. Turns out robot limbs can make anything better. There's something incredibly satisfying

about throwing yourself off an edge, firing out your metal hand and swinging to safety. My highlight was escaping a brutal hammering by leaping off a bridge, swinging under it to come out on the other side, behind the guy attacking me, and killing him with one shot to the back of the head. Bok!

Download of the month

There's no escaping the fact that **Wolfenstein** is an old, archaic game built out of fat brick pixels and sampled death cries that sound like they were recorded on wax cylinders. But. Here's the thing: this is history. It wasn't the first FPS but it's the one that made modern shooters what they are today – the hand holding the gun, collecting ammo, circle strafing enemies – it all started here. If you liked Killzone 2 then meet its grandpappy. It's actually pretty fun as you shoot Nazi mutants and scour the walls for secret passages. That little 'click!' noise when you trigger a hidden door is oddly addictive. Plus you get to battle a minigun-toting robo-Hitler. I'll say that again. Robo. Hitler.



Putting along

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10

Fore! (Plus four equals eight)



Playing Tiger online is so gentle it feels like a trap. I'm so used to hitting PSN just to shoot people or drive a car faster than them – swishing a golf club around to warm applause and bird tweets feels like that bit in Vietnam homecoming movies just before the returning vet goes postal. Which is to say that it's a refreshing, relaxing change of pace that, tortuous menus aside (*again*, EA?), is great fun.

▲ Whizz through your shots and you can watch opponents' strokes for tips.

EA is making a big noise about the updated Live Tournament mode, which is essentially a series of detached leaderboard challenges. They're good but lack any real interaction, so the best fun I had was with three friends playing a straightforward round. Opponents' shots appear in real-time on your screen as coloured, Hawk-Eye-style lines arcing across the course, so if you hang back a few seconds on the tee you can see how they approach each hole (handy if, like me, you're much worse than just about everybody in the world). Finish before other players and you can watch them tie up the hole – it's smooth, inclusive, and with loads of time to chat as you take shots, sociable and fun.

Anti-fun lobby

That is, once you've actually got a game going. As with other EA sports titles (flashback to attempting to



Info

Format PS3 **ETA** Out now
Pub EA **Dev** EA Tiburon **Players** 1-4
Web ea.com/games/tiger-woods-2010
It's like Wandering around a clubhouse blindfolded, shouting into the darkness.

arrange a ten-on-ten FIFA 09 game for over an hour, crying, and failing) the menus are a needlessly complex mess. Rather than simply inviting your friends to a room, you have to make a lobby that they manually find through a scrolling menu. When you're all inside, a match doesn't just happen, you have to create and launch it separately – and all without talking, since inexplicably there's no voice chat in the lobbies. Once you're in, you're in, but Christ it'll put off casual players. Credit to the game that it's still worth playing despite this shambles, but please, *please* fix it next year. **Nathan Ditum**

Network bust

Ghostbusters

The form of your destruction is online lobbies



Remember that 'who ya gonna call?' bit from the movie? If you're trying to play this online then the answer won't be the Ghostbusters. It'll be whoever you're trying to get into a game with, as you struggle with one of the worst lobby systems ever devised. It lies on top of PS3's existing friends system like a thick thorny hedge that's trying to stop you getting together. You can't just dip into the friends list stored on your

▲ Playing with mates online is fun but really tricky to organise.

PS3. No – you have to send a whole other Ghostbusters-specific friend invite, which they have to accept before you can create a game and *then* invite people in. You can't even select names from your friends list, you have to type it all in again. Times this by four as you try to get everyone organised, and the back-and-forth messaging it takes to get a match feels like a game in itself.

We got one!

Of course, you can play with complete randoms, but Ghostbusters' multiplayer is focused on small four-player co-op games (there are no competitive options) and half the fun comes from shouting at mates. So challenges like Protection (defending equipment from attack) or Thief (preventing ghosts stealing artefacts) are best with people you know.



Info

Format PS3 **ETA** Out now **Pub** Sony
Dev Terminal Reality **Players** 1-4
Web ghostbustersgame.com
It's like A tiny glimpse into the infinite confusion and loneliness of the afterlife.

Other choices, like Containment, which sees you capturing ghosts, or the stay-alive Survival round work well enough with strangers, but their depth is limited. The real disappointment is the lack of a full co-op campaign. The nearest you get are a series of short multipart missions made from the other modes stapled together. That's fun, but I'd rather run through the main story. It's disappointing, because there's a hint of how the ghost-catching gameplay could have made a really different online experience, but there's nothing meaty enough to offer more than a few nights' thrills. **Leon Hurley**



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Uncharted 2 Among Thieves

The world exclusive review
Only in Official PlayStation Magazine



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There are now more ways than ever to interact with your pals at OPM. You can email us or interact on Twitter at the addresses above, talk to us and other readers on our Facebook group (PlayStation Official Magazine UK), and even write an *actual letter* (do people really still do that?!) to us at Official PlayStation Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. We'll reply to the best correspondence next issue.

Stuff we'd really like to hear about...

- What first-party exclusive game most excites you?
- Will FIFA or PES win the big footy battle this year?
- What gaming issue do you want to hear us talk about in our podcast?
- How would you like to see the motion-sensing controller used?

PS3

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - UK

Japan Sony Computer Entertainment
UK: Sony Computer Entertainment Limited

MASSIVE SONY BLOWOUT!
God of War III
Gran Turismo Sport
Uncharted 2
Heavy Rain

Brink

The future of shooters has arrived

The return of *Mortal Kombat* and
 Assassin's Creedpen Culture Revolution
 The new *Call of Duty* and the
 Fight Night Round 4 review
 Why we love the new
 Assassin's Hunter

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ULTIMATE RACERS PSPgo

FINAL FANTASY XIII-2 AGENT

Moral maze

After reading the review for inFamous in your mag I went out and excitedly bought the special edition first thing on Friday morning. Wow. It's like the videogame version of crack – I haven't stopped playing, and right now it's Sunday night. What I really like is the karma system, it's been in a lot of games, but I think developers should all take a leaf out of Sucker Punch's book in the future. Your karma changes so much of the story and how you play it, so you really can play the

Email us at opm@futurenet.com or write to Letters, OPM, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

game twice. Other games offer you choices between good and evil but they never really affect the way you play as much as they do in Farnous. Wouldn't it be great if throughout MGS4 you could make Snake act like a dick and in the end take over the nanomachines for himself? Or in Call Of Duty 4 secretly sabotage the SAS throughout the game? Then, in the end, when you're lying on the bridge, turn the pistol back on Price [sorry Pricey]. Make it happen developers!

Stephen Bamdad, by email

Kill Captain Price? You've gone wrong. However, we're glad you loved inFamous as much as we did. Karma is a weird one, though; it works well in games because they thrive on rigid structures of reward and punishment, unlike the real world which is cold, random and utterly devoid of any meaning. Enjoy the issue, kids.

To be honest, I don't really care about the console war, as long as consoles are still being made, I'm happy. However, I do care when every time I read a news article about PS3 (or any console) the page is blighted by hundreds of fanboys each saying something more idiotic than the other. While I think it's great people



▲ Being the hero is so 2008
– 2009 is all about being evil

Text OPM
Text 'Letters' then your message to 87474 - we'll include the best txts in the mag innit!*

can voice their opinion on the net, I hate the fact that a lot of people make rude comments about each other, trying to prove each other wrong. If these people's consoles are really the best then why are they spending so much time on the net arguing with each other instead of just playing it? Unfortunately it only takes one person to make a comment and then the whole page is full of derogatory remarks. I think console wars are destroying people's faith in consoles and they achieve nothing other than leaving people feeling angry and annoyed.

Anton Ward, by email

For a fleeting second we imagined you as a young King Canute, holding a futile hand out against the rising tide of online idiocy.

If you're looking for (mostly) level-headed games chat we recommend the boards of our Facebook group or following us on Twitter at [OPM_UK](#).

Here's something I've been pondering for as long as I could hold a controller: Sega had Sonic, Nintendo had Mario, but who is PlayStation's figurehead? I've been giving it some thought and, quite frankly, my head hurts. Surely Lara Croft's bounding bosoms once led the way for Sony, but the fact that her games have become so damn lame of late, she's now just a mere vehicle for queen of crazy Jolie – she's lost her dog shooting,

What's on my hard drive



Lee Baker
by email

Music

Lots of dance stuff for when I've got people over. Loads of Pink Floyd for when I want to chill out.

Photo

Backgrounds, game screenshots, pictures from my school trip to Paris and an embarrassing amount of lolcats.

Video

All the E3 stuff and a lot of episodes of *Scrubs* and *The Simpsons*.

Game

Wolfenstein 3D, Bejeweled 2, Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic, Final Fantasy VII, Wipeout HD... loads!

Friends

A few school mates, loads from gametrailers.com and a few from QPM's Facebook page.

Tell us what's
on your hard drive!
Email us at [opm@
futurenet
.com](mailto:opm@futurenet.com)

puzzle-solving edge. So who next? Perhaps Crash Bandicoot, the trousered, crate-smashing, ginger-promoting marsupial? No, I've personally dismissed him because I just don't like him. (Long story including a weekend in Wales, several crates of TNT and a giant pixelated tiger.) So it's Kratos versus Solid Snake versus Dante, and there's only one way to solve it... FIGHT!

Jimmy Rumble, by email

Or maybe, y'know, we don't need a mascot at all. Sony has managed to shift more than 136 million PS2s without having to rely on anthropomorphised animals to sell the console. So far, so good then. (And anyway, we all know it's Nate Drake.)

★ Dirty worms

I hope this gives you something to laugh about. It's an unfortunate 'incident' that occurred a week or so back. After a long evening of FPS action I've recently taken to enjoying a round or two of Worms with friends to finish off the night's gaming. It was a warm night, and the window was wide open for air. I put on my headset and launched in with the usual stream of corny innuendos ("you can't get your worm up", "he just made an explosion in my hole" etc). What I didn't realise is that my landlady's son could hear it all. He had to go outside, and then up three flights of stairs to knock on my door and suggest I close the window! Oh the shame! I'm embarrassed beyond belief, but at least I'm moving house now.

Jenivere Stunt, by email

Okay, fine. Have a subscription to the mag. But only because it's been a tough old month and we're hoping this will somehow encourage other lady readers to email us with game-related sexy talk. Or unrelated. Whatever really.

Fever pitch

Well, the evidence is really mounting up. I think it's too late for me and the only thing I can wonder as I near oblivion is how on Earth has this happened? It all started with a little PlayStation game called ISS Pro Evolution 2...

Having grown up with FIFA since 1996, this radical game that encouraged intelligent passing and allowed you to score goals from close-range without always arrowing the ball into the top corner led me

Worms: addictive, fun, and an excuse for some filthy innuendo.



Ask SONY

Q How do I volunteer for Beta Trials?

A You need to be over the age of 18, based in Europe, and an active member of the PlayStation community. Just keep checking the Announcements And Events thread at community.eu.playstation.com. Good luck!

"Lame" Lara doesn't cut the hero mustard.



into a new era of my game-playing life. As time went on, and Konami brought out yearly instalments on PS2, I (and many others who didn't mind spending hours and hours editing) became nothing short of addicted. While the majority used their study leave to revise for their GCSEs, I stayed inside recreating Wigan's emblem pixel by pixel. Blast that JJB badge was difficult to pull off!

But I digress – this love affair was severely tested when an abomination going by the name of PES 2008 was released on PS3. Although much has been improved in the latest version, gameplay-wise, I would argue that Pro Evolution Soccer 6 remains the greatest football game ever made. Yet, despite me knowing this, I'm currently playing my third Master League on 2009. Worse still, I'm cataloguing every game that I play with my Newcastle ML team to display in all its glory on forums. I know for a fact that my most expensive signing, Sergio Agüero, has only played 590 minutes of football so far this season, and that my top striker Mario Gomez is averaging more than a goal per game.

One part of me worries for my own health while another part of me wonders if it was a mistake selling Joey Barton. You can give us all the heartless glitz and glam of FIFA, but at the end of the day, this is the ONLY series in gaming that I let influence my life to such a bamboozling extent.

Jimmy Ottaway, by email

Our editor-in-chief Tim Clark knows your pain. He's currently on his second Master League team in PES 2009, it's the year 2015 in the game, and he's bought all the same players. He only keeps going in the vague hope that if he gets to 2020 the fans will start arriving by jet pack. But, having played this year's FIFA, even our man is willing to concede that the whip hand now seems to rest with EA's series. The new 360° movement system is revelatory, and, more importantly, Arshavin is amazing in it.

Off the Wall



Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group



Soft soap

"Let's just say in Famous on hard was like being hit with a sponge by an infant with no arms."

Stewie Hitchcock



Reading matter

"It's a tough decision every time visiting the toilet – do I take the latest edition of OPM or the biology revision guide for the exam on Friday?"

Simon Walker



Price cuts

"If Modern Warfare 2 does not have Captain Price, I'm going to march all the way to Infinity Ward HQ and ask them nicely why not."

Max Loughurst



Cheap labour

"Straight to bargain bin with Nathan Ditum... Is this how you treat all your staff? Is he so bad that you wish to sell him off so cheaply?"

Christian Newton



Auction win

"Just won a knitted solid sackboy on ebay! Although I can't help but think I should be spending my money on things other than knitted dolls."

Rhys Jones



Prince Of Persia

"It will most likely just kick the crap out of our already pretty frail hope for a decent game-to-film adaptation like a big, badly cast bully."

Holly Cooper

Send your questions to:
opm@futurenet.com

SuperCar Challenge

Promotional Feature



The stunning Stirling Moss McLaren SLR is free when you pre-order SuperCar Challenge through certain retailers. Check out the website for details www.supercar-challenge.com

PS
076

SUPERCAR THE ULTIMATE

SuperCar Challenge Format PS3 Out August 2009 Publisher System 3 Developer Eutechnyx



If you were on the hunt for a realistic racing game last year that didn't have the word 'prologue' in the title, there was really only one option – Ferrari Challenge. It had real tracks, enough modes to keep you busy for hours, online action and, of course, all those lush red supercars to race around its circuits in.

But what if you're a bit of a Lamborghini fan? Or if you fancied a blast around the circuits in a Pagani Zonda? Sadly, you'd be out of luck. System 3 put together a great racer, but by being so narrowly focused, Ferrari Challenge only let fans of the Italian car manufacturer live out their racing dreams. That's where SuperCar Challenge comes in.

With the 'F' word gone from the title, System 3 has been let off the leash so to ➤

READER OFFER

OPM readers can take advantage of an exclusive chance to try out the 16-player online demo of SuperCar Challenge! Log onto www.cvg.co.uk for more details



PS
077

CHALLENGE RACE EXPERIENCE

SuperCar Challenge

Promotional Feature

A CLEAR VIEW

This is racing in full 1080p – and it looks even better on your telly



Rear view

Keeping things true to real life, the interior view gives you the use of fully functioning mirrors. Pulling the shoulder triggers turns your head so you can look around the car's cockpit from left to right too.

Windshield

The game features an ultra-realistic rain system. Drops hit the screen warping your view before your wipers clear it away, as spray kicks up off the tarmac and puddles slowly form in dips in the tracks.

Fast and furious

With 16 cars on the course at once, every race promises automotive carnage – as carefully weaving your way through the pack is deeply challenging and immersive.

Stunning realism

The cars are as detailed on the inside as they are on the outside. All the dashboard dials are operational and the driver performs realistic animations as he drives.

Maximum resolution

Full 1080p HD resolution means the whole picture is pin-sharp, with even the most distant details clear to see. It's quite a feat with 16 supercars on the course at once.

078

speak, and so SuperCar Challenge gives you the keys to the great supercars on the planet. There are dozens to choose from and every single one is modelled on the real thing right down to the smallest details – inside and out – and set up to feel and sound as close as humanly possible to the actual supercars.

Now you can choose a car that suits, from the extreme-looking Lamborghini Murciélago R-GT and McLaren F1, to the suave and sophisticated Aston Martin DBR9. The only restriction you have is that if it's not a supercar, it's not in the game. A fortunate restriction, we think you'll agree. There's no time for clapped-out bangers or middle-of-the-road boy-racer screamers here. No having to race through hours of tedious Sunday driving tournaments to earn yourselves the right to have some proper fun.

Nope, from the very first moment you turn on the game and hit the racetrack, you'll have your virtual butt planted comfortably in a top-class supercar. Head into your garage before you've even entered your first race and you'll find that Mucielago we mentioned earlier sitting next to a shiny new Ferrari Enzo and Pagani Zonda F! Which would you choose?

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Customise your car with a comprehensive decal system



You've got your favourite car shining nicely in your garage, but why stop there? The latest decal system goes into even more depth than ever before. First, choose a base colour.



Decided on your colour? Good. Now decorate your car with over 500 crazy stickers, including stripes, arrows, tribal patterns, flags, logos, and more! You could be there a while.



Want your car to carry a personal message? Just type using an on-screen keyboard and it'll appear on the paintwork. Take pictures to show it off and share your designs online.

There's no shortage of courses either. Real-world tracks have been accurately recreated in the game, including all the greats such as Nürburgring, Spa, Monza, Silverstone and many more. And System 3 has gone the extra mile by creating several awesome fictional courses to test your vehicular mettle including a thrilling street course called Riviera.

The feel of the cars is ultimately what racing games are all about though, and SuperCar Challenge has a new, more realistic handling system. Cars feel weightier than ever and you get a clearer sense of the tyres' connection with the ground. You can sense the grip of smooth, dry Tarmac, or the judder of mounting the curb as you hit the apexes of corners. If a single tyre accidentally hits the grass you'll instantly feel the sudden, dramatic loss of traction and stability on the road.

SuperCar Challenge also has a new rain system that makes realistic changes to the way the car handles (and it looks incredibly pretty, too). Wet surfaces lengthen braking distances – but that's just the basic stuff. What's far cooler is watching glistening puddles formed on the course in bumpy areas or in dips in the road. You'll spot these pools of water as you blast along, kicking up blinding amounts of spray when you splash through them.

If you go all-out with your gaming setup, you can feel even more in touch with the car by using a force feedback steering wheel – such as those from Logitech or Thrustmaster. ►

HELP FROM THE PROS

System 3 calls on the help of a *real* racing veteran

How do you know when a racing game is realistic if you've never been in a real race? It's a good question. System 3 didn't simply want to rely on guesswork, so it turned to the expertise of a professional race-car driver.

Bruno Senna, nephew of the all-time great F1 racer Ayrton Senna and top-running GP2 driver (with his eyes on a seat in F1), was the man who helped the team fine-tune Ferrari Challenge. His feedback on the game's handling helped make it much more like the real thing, and much of the tech he helped produce for Ferrari Challenge has been poured into SuperCar Challenge with a further year's worth of refinement gone into the finished product. That's called pulling out the stops...



“There's no having to race through hours of tedious Sunday driving tournaments to earn yourself the right to have some proper fun.”

SuperCar Challenge

Promotional Feature

MODES FOR EVERY MOOD

SuperCar Challenge's many racing modes explained

Challenge mode

Tour the world completing different challenges, such as qualifying high in a timed run, or winning a race starting from the back of the pack. Earn cash, cars and respect.

Quick Race

A mode designed to get your bum in a car as quickly as possible, but you've still got plenty of options: car, course, handling, lap count and weather. Decisions...

Time Trial mode

Blast around an empty course perfecting your racing line and shaving milliseconds off your fastest lap. It's a chance to learn the course and smash its online records.

Arcade mode

Hit the Tarmac in 16-car tournament races with the simplest of rules: get a podium spot to move to the next race, or fall behind and get the boot. It's easier said than done...

Tournament mode

There's a separate tournament cup for every car in the game. If you think you've mastered your car, here's where you can prove it. But are you able to master them all?

Tutorial mode

Tiff Needell, iconic TV presenter and experienced racing driver, lends his charismatic vocals to the game, tutoring players through 16 of the game's heart-stopping courses.

With one of these babies in place you'll feel the tension in the steering wheel around high-speed bends and the shudder of the wheel as you nudge other racers out of the way.

Now, this may all sound very hardcore, but unlike other sims you don't have to be a hardcore race fan to have fun with this game.

Before you start your race you get a choice between three handling types. Assisted mode holds your hands a little, helping you with your braking and steering, and the cars are easy to handle. You can throw it about and be pretty sure it'll do what you tell it.

Arcade mode strips away the assisted steering and braking so you have to do more of the driving for yourself, but the stability control of the car remains high, so you can be as heavy footed as you like coming out of corners and you won't get any surprise spins from your motor.

But switch it over to Simulation mode and you get the full shebang, forcing you to be skilled with your braking points, gentle with the throttle and manage the weight distribution of the car to avoid losing the back end.

Facing the wrong way can be race-destroying, especially when you consider Supercar Challenge throws you on the course with 15 other racers – both off and online. Offline, the AI is smart and reactive – they respond to your presence, take strategic

“Go online by firing up PSN and you'll be facing off against 15 other boy racers.”

lines and, at the same time, make plenty of mistakes of their own, like real humans.

Hit PSN for some online action and you'll find yourself in heated races with 15 other human players. The dev team has worked to make this the smoothest 16-player online racing game yet, with over 2000 beta testers already ripping around courses to help optimise those online servers. This should mean that, even with all those cars on the track, things will run smoothly and lag-free.

The extra year's work Eutechnyx has had since Ferrari Challenge hit the shelves shows – whether you're a hardcore race nut or casual speedster, there's something in here for you. It's a full-fat racer with a lot to talk about, which is why you'll find everything else you need to know about System 3's new racer over the next few pages.

And don't forget to visit the official website at: www.supercar-challenge.com.

MEET THE FERRARI FXX

Thrash around in Ferrari's most extreme car



You may recognise this car's square lines and angry alien look as the Ferrari Enzo – a super-fast pedigree car from Italy. It isn't that though. It's lighter and faster than an Enzo.



Just to give you an idea of how crazy the FXX is, it smashed Top Gear's test circuit record, finishing a lap in 1:10.07; destroying the previous record of 1:17.1. That's pretty quick.

BEST OF THE BUNCH

The hottest cars money can buy



Lamborghini Gallardo GT

Mentioned in more rap songs than MTV has letters, the Lamborghini Gallardo has to be one of the most desirable supercars of modern times. It'll get you chicks.



Ferrari 330 P4

Like classic race cars? Here's one for you – a '60s racer that's today worth well over \$10 million for its rarity, the 330 P4 is a renowned V12 endurance car.



Ferrari 430 Scuderia

Racing cars have a tendency to be a little ugly. Not this one – the F430 is possibly one of the sexiest cars ever. The 430 Scuderia is even lighter and more powerful. It's a real beast.



McLaren F1

Once the fastest production car in the world (top speed 243mph), and still the fastest naturally aspirated production car, the single-seated F1 is a true modern classic.



Bugatti Veyron

At a stonking €1.4million this is one of the most expensive roadcars in the world! For that you get a massive 1,001bhp and a top speed of 407km/h! Best start saving then...

WIN The Ultimate Racing Setup!

Win SuperCar Challenge prizes worth £1,500!

In order to celebrate the launch of SuperCar Challenge on PS3 we've teamed up with System 3 to bring you the ultimate racing setup for your home.

Boasting 1080p graphics, gutsy engine sounds and super-realistic handling you really need a high-end setup in order to play SuperCar Challenge in all its glory. And that's exactly what you can win. The winner of this competition will get:

- Top-of-the-range 42", 1080p Plasma TV
- Luxurious Playseat Racing Frame
- Force Feedback Logitech G25 wheel and pedals
- PS3 Console & HDMI cable
- SuperCar Challenge game
- Ferrari Challenge game
- 1/16th Scale, Limited Edition Bruno Senna F430 Car

Four runners up will also receive a copy of the game and a 1/16th Scale Bruno Senna Car.

To be in with a chance of winning these amazing prizes, simply text **SCC** and your answer to the following question to **87474**, texts cost 50p plus standard network rate. For example **SCC A**.

Alternatively enter online at www.futurecomps.co.uk/scc09

Q. Which car was the standard vehicle for the 2008 Ferrari Challenge series?

Was it a FXX b F430 c 599XX



TERMS AND CONDITIONS:
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GET THE EXCLUSIVE MCLAREN SLR

Pre-order and get this in-game car exclusively

This is the brand new Stirling Moss McLaren SLR unveiled earlier this year. With only 75 being built, it will be one of the most exclusive cars in the world. And it'll be one of the most exclusive cars in the game too, because only those who pre-order SuperCar Challenge at GAME will have access to it.

Remember – you need to reserve your copy at GAME. Get your name down early and you'll be part of an exclusive group racing around in this 650bhp, 217mph animal. Think of the respect you'll get online. "OMG, weh'd u get that?" people will ask. Probably.





PS3

Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games so far



1
Platformer
LittleBigPlanet

Unleash your inner Miyamoto by creating and sharing your own levels online using the brilliantly simple but canyon-deep editing tools in Sony's phenomenal platformer. Absolutely essential.

10 Pub Sony
Dev Media Molecule



2
Shooter
**Call Of Duty 4
Modern Warfare**

The SAS and US Marines invite you to fight the war on terror as Call Of Duty dumps WW2 for a modern-day setting. A beautiful, brutal and near flawless shooter.

10 Pub Activision
Dev Infinity Ward



3
Action
**Grand Theft
Auto IV**

It's everything you love about GTA – the twisted characters, epic missions and savage humour – polished to perfection. A true modern masterpiece.

10 Pub Rockstar Games
Dev Rockstar North



4
Stealth
**Metal Gear Solid 4
Guns Of The Patriots**

A typically esoteric but masterful end to Snake's saga, blending beautifully immersive action with a lifetime's worth of cut-scenes. Divisive but essential.

10 Pub Konami
Dev Konami Productions



5
Platformer
Bioshock

Epic first-person adventure set in a ruined underwater city that combines brilliant genetic weapons with beautiful design, tons of atmosphere, and a genuinely affecting story.

10 Pub Take Two
Dev 2K Marin



6
Action-Adventure
**Uncharted
Drake's Fortune**

Treasure hunter Nathan Drake is after the fabled gold of El Dorado in this superb blend of action and physical puzzling. Think Gears Of War meets Tomb Raider.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Naughty Dog



7
Shooter
Killzone 2

Looks to die for, and endless waves of orange-eyed space Nazis aiming to ensure that's exactly what happens. Guerrilla's super-shooter is gritty, fierce and an utterly essential buy.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Guerrilla



8
Fighter
Street Fighter IV

Thumping return to form for the series, satisfying both the hardcore and newcomers like a particularly supple lady of the night. Lush visuals and sweet online play make this essential.

9 Pub Capcom
Dev Capcom



9
Shooter
Resistance 2

A sequel that masterfully surpasses the original. Nathan Hale returns to fight bigger aliens on American soil and delivers on gameplay, guns and polish.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Insomniac



10
Platformer
**Ratchet & Clank
Tools Of Destruction**

Platforming royalty return to save the galaxy. Exquisite graphics and a riotous arsenal of comedy weapons make this the pair's best interstellar outing yet.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Insomniac

PSN
Games

Wipeout HD

Gloriously designed futuristic racer, the only drawback to which is that it's really hard and incredibly addictive.

Pain

Possibly the most fun game on PSN stars a self-harming freak who launches himself into points-scoring hazards. Ouch.

Trash Panic

Cram layer upon layer of garbage into a giant bin, using heavy objects to break the lighter ones and torching anything left.

Pixeljunk Eden

You're the grimy – don't ask – and need to climb the screen to reach spectra by growing and jumping between wispy plants. Got that?

Reader's Choice



Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

"I only recently got into Call Of Duty 4 and I seriously have no idea why I didn't play it earlier! It's fantastic fun, and I'm afraid to say I'm hopelessly addicted - I really can't wait for Modern Warfare 2 now. Bring it on."

Laura Varley
Portsmouth



Power

Custom silicon harnesses crisp HD, ear-splitting audio, multi-processor might, and Blu-ray to deliver pure gaming perfection.

Connectivity

USB slots to plug in your motion-sensing Sixaxis pads and many other devices.

Online

Surf the net, message friends and download movies, music and expansion packs, plus demos and games from the PlayStation Store.



11 Music SingStar

Sony's much-loved karaoke game steps up to next-gen with a neater interface, online options and tons of tunes via SingStore. Outkast's Hey Ya and The Killers' Mr Brightside are highlights.

9 Pub Sony
Dev SCE Studios London



12 Action-RPG Fallout 3

The natural successor to Oblivion's RPG throne plays out in a post-apocalyptic America with Liam Neeson as your AWOL dad. An epic adventure without the self-indulgent sprawl.

9 Pub Bethesda Softworks
Dev Bethesda Game Studios



13 Action inFamous

A big explosion tears Empire City to bits and gives hero Cole sparky superpowers in this sharp comic book adventure. Fluent climbing, frantic shooting and genuinely epic set-pieces make this a must-buy.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Sucker Punch



14 Sports FIFA 09

Impressively strong core gameplay on the pitch, ten-on-ten online matches and a new multiseason Be A Pro mode make this the top-scoring football choice on PS3.

9 Pub EA
Dev EA Canada



15 Sports UFC Undisputed 2009

Fantastically organic round of mixed martial arts fighting, where the lack of HUD and chance of being KO'd by a single punch is a great leveller.

9 Pub THQ
Dev Yuke's



16 Racer Burnout Paradise The Ultimate Box

The best racer on PS3, now repackaged with tons of DLC and featuring motorbikes and night-time in addition to searingly fast racing. Simply beautiful.

9 Pub EA
Dev Criterion Games



17 Music Guitar Hero World Tour

Bigger, better, rockier. Battles are out, the set list is super strong, drums and vocals mean you don't need to wait for Rock Band 2, plus there's a studio too!

9 Pub Activision
Dev Neversoft



18 Racer Race Driver Grid

Straight from the TOCA garage and into first place. Smooth mechanics, aggressive races and fine-tuned cars combine to create the most satisfying racer yet on PS3.

9 Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters



19 Action Resident Evil 5

Horror classic swaps dark corners for the glare of the African sun to reveal the origins of the virus, and the new co-op mode is relationship-destroying magic. "You let them eat me!"

8 Pub Capcom
Dev Capcom



20 Action Dead Space

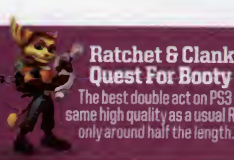
Interstellar survival horror that robs from Bioshock, Resident Evil 4 and Event Horizon, but gets away with it thanks to looking beautiful, playing brilliantly and delivering some very big scares.

8 Pub EA
Dev EA Redwood Shores



Rag Doll Kung Fu

Sackboy does Bruce Lee, as an idea from Media Molecule co-founder Mark Healey is spun into a frantic Hong Kong action-style party brawler.



Ratchet & Clank Quest For Booty

The best double act on PS3 - the same high quality as a usual Ratchet, only around half the length.



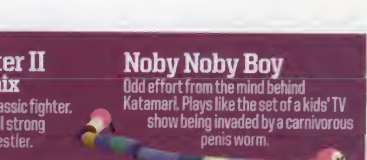
Flower

The game equivalent of counting to 20 and thinking happy thoughts: calming music, swooshing wind and pretty colours. Ahhh.



Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix

Hi-def polish of the classic fighter. 20 years on, it's still strong like a Russian wrestler.



Noby Noby Boy

Odd effort from the mind behind Katamari. Plays like the set of a kids' TV show being invaded by a carnivorous penis worm.



PSP

Essential collection

20 indispensable games for your handheld – try them or buy them, just make sure you play them



1

Action-Adventure
God of War
Chains Of Olympus

Bloody, god-slaying prequel that matches the PS2 games' vibrant visuals and frantic hack and slash action.

10 Pub Sony
Dev Ready At Dawn



2

Strategy
Final Fantasy Tactics
The War Of Lions

A genuinely gripping plot, delicious-looking scenery and the oceanic 'job' system make this the best Fantasy so far.

10 Pub Square Enix
Dev Square Enix



3

Free-Roaming
Grand Theft Auto
Vice City Stories

Everything you'd expect from GTA, only portable. Compelling missions on foot or behind the wheel, plus plenty of '80s tunes.

10 Pub Rockstar
Dev Rockstar Leeds



4

Puzzler
Lumines II

Move blocks and clear the screen to a brilliantly eclectic soundtrack. New features and modes improve an addictive fusion of music and puzzling.

9 Pub Buena Vista
Dev Q Entertainment



5

Fighter
Tekken
Dark Resurrection

The console version has faded but Tekken's still a top game on PSP. Sharp looks and new moves make it a must.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Namco Bandai



6

Platformer
Ratchet & Clank
Size Matters

The classic platforming duo storm PSP with their regular mix of super-polished gameplay and bizarre experimental weapons.

9 Pub Sony
Dev High Impact Games



7

Stealth-Strategy
Syphon Filter
Logan's Shadow

A top-class stealth sequel. Gabe returns with new weapons, new moves and the news that his partner could be a double agent.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Sony Bend

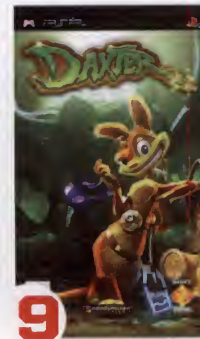


8

Racer
Ridge Racer

Powerslide around a mix of classic and new tracks. A great arcade racer where teasing out a drift while taking a corner at 135mph never gets dull.

9 Pub Namco Bandai
Dev Namco Bandai



9

Platformer
Dexter

Jak's weasel-faced sidekick goes bug-hunting. Designed for PSP from the ground up, this is a good-looking adventure with loads of variety.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Ready At Dawn Studios



10

Platformer
Lego Star Wars II
The Original Trilogy

The original and best entire Star Wars trilogy retold using still-funny Lego blocks and sharp, playable platforming.

9 Pub LucasArts
Dev Traveller's Tales

PSP
War



Killzone
Liberation

Re-spec of the big-ticket shooter from first-person to isometric adventure.



Resistance
Retribution

The best FPS on PSP – an ace story branching out from the Resistance thread.



Call Of Duty
Roads To Victory

If you're not done fighting World War 2 – and you want to do it in the toilets at work – this is your man.



SOCOM
Tactical Strike

Special Forces tacti-thon that feels like a shooter in slo-mo. Odd but fun.

Team Choice



Patapon

"Yes, I'm still playing the first one. Baby mountains that cry rocks, a beetle called a Poocheek, giant dragons and a tiny army you control by drumming. What's not to love?"

Rachel Penny
News editor

Get connected

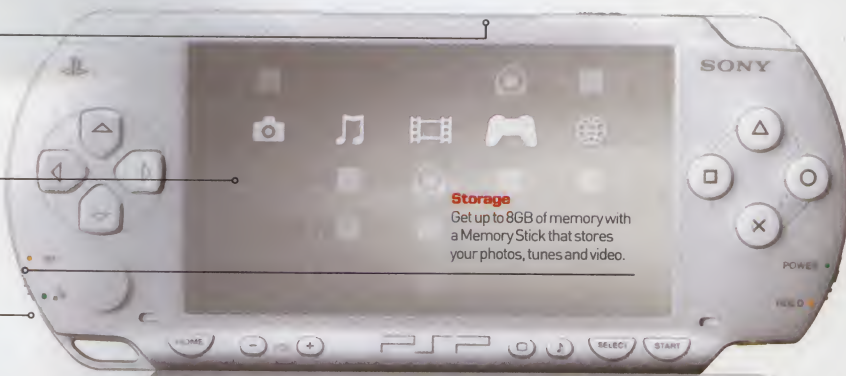
Hook up to PS3 or PC. Now you can transfer music, movies, pics, games and more.

Screen

PSP packs more power per polygon than PS2, and this little screen can cope with video too.

Wireless

The magical switch that opens up the internet for on-the-go net browsing and multiplayer.



Storage

Get up to 8GB of memory with a Memory Stick that stores your photos, tunes and video.



Racer

Flatout Head On

A Burnout steal that's better than the real thing (on PSP). There's racing in there, but mostly this is about gratuitous destruction.

9 Pub Empire
Dev Bugbear



Rhythm

Resistance Retribution

A clever link-up with the big -hitting PS3 sequel and smart auto-aiming makes this the best shooting PSP's nub can offer.

8 Pub Sony
Dev Sony Bend



Rhythm

Patapon 2

A cartoony side-scrolling battler starring warring tribes of eyeball armies. As well as hypnotic rhythm controls, the sequel also features co-op multiplayer.

8 Pub Sony
Dev Pyramid



Platformer

Locoroco 2

Tilt a pop-art 2D world to coax a herd of smiling blobs to safety to the tune of yabbering J-pop. Not as groundbreaking as the original, but still fun.

8 Pub Sony
Dev SCE Studios Japan



Sports

FIFA 09

Edges PES 2009 as the best footy sim on PSP with a decent adaptation of PS3's Be A Pro mode and an embarrassment of licence riches, as usual.

8 Pub EA
Dev EA

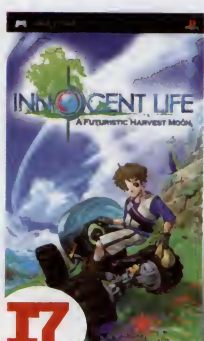


Sports

Virtua Tennis World Tour

Simple, responsive controls make for instantly rewarding racket-twanging action. Career mode lends ruinous addiction.

8 Pub Sega
Dev Sumo Digital



RPG

Innocent Life A Futuristic Harvest Moon

Teach a robot farmer to cultivate crops and raise animals in this gently seductive farming sim. Better than it sounds, promise.

8 Pub Rising Star
Dev ArtePiazza



Racer

Wipeout Pulse

Iconic weapon-assisted future racer reborn with new tracks and the ability to create custom soundtracks. Hard to master, but all the sweeter for it.

8 Pub Sony
Dev Sony Studio Liverpool



Sports

Football Manager Handheld 2009

The 2D match engine imported from the PC version makes this life-eating obsession more dangerously playable than ever.

8 Pub Sega
Dev Sports Interactive



Third-Person Action

Killzone Liberation

A savage third-person shooter that sees you fighting a future war on a barren planet. Brilliant weapons and vehicles.

8 Pub Sony
Dev Guerrilla Games

PSP
Sport



FIFA 09

As you'd expect, solid looks and accomplished gameplay backed up by a boat-load of licences.



PES 2009

Plays a lot like the old PS2 versions of PES, which - to the shame of the not-nearly-as-polished PS3 update - means brilliantly.



Virtua Tennis 3

A slick and addictive conversion of Sega's old pro, which includes both a career mode and - crucially - those incredible mini-games.



International Cricket Captain III

Moreish management sim, not quite up to Footy Man status, but with frightening cricketing depth.

Faith

The pretty face of free-running

Free-runner Faith laughs in the face of vertigo, battles armies of attackers without even touching a gun, and takes on the oppressive government of Mirror's Edge pretty much single-handedly. Now *that's* multitasking. Faith works as a runner, carrying mysterious data across the sterile and shiny rooftops of the city. If that wasn't enough, she's also trying to clear the name of her sister, who's been framed for murder. And when she's not plummeting to yet another death, Faith likes heart-to-hearts with fellow runner Celeste, run-ins with wrestlers, and punching senior policemen. Our kind of girl.

The world of Faith

Infinite disposable police

Hunting down a fit, ballsy girl with almost supernatural athletic ability has led the city's dictatorship to put the recruitment program for doomed grunts... we mean tough policemen, into constant overdrive.



Lift-based propaganda

What better place for a government to put must-read propaganda than the loading time-disguising lifts? With waits in excess of 30 seconds, the non-existent populace has plenty of time to read the weak dystopian satire.



Empty streets

Dictatorships need to look good: get the trains running on time, and have nice, clean, well-lit streets. Handy for Faith, as it means she gets to speed through and over said areas without having to concern herself with falling over pedestrians.



Information is power

Information destroys dictatorships. Whatever Faith and her running buddies are carrying around, from harmless pizza menus to top-secret documents, the powers that be are doing everything in their power to stop them.



Best weapons

Benelli M3 Super 90

The pump-action shotgun floors attackers at such close range you can smell what they had for breakfast.



Beretta 92

You can't reload in Mirror's Edge, and the pocket-sized Beretta doesn't hold many bullets, so be prepared to drop it after mere seconds of carnage.



FN Scar

The most common weapon in the game, the assault rifle is the boomstick of choice for the relentless SWAT teams who've been ordered to hound you.



Human Leg

This is the only humane way for Faith to incapacitate the men pursuing her. Generally, they swoon from arousal right before the concussion starts.



Friends and foes



Celeste

Celeste is a fellow runner. She teaches Faith the all-important jump-turn-jump move, right before (spoiler) betraying her and revealing her role in the cop's Project Icarus.



Mercury

Merc is a semi-retired runner and Faith's guide on the ground. While Faith runs, climbs and faces legions of gun-toting cops, Merc offers helpful advice over the radio waves.



Ropeburn

The wrestler-turned-security-agent is the most minimal boss fight ever. Will you press **A** to kill him? Or will you not press **A**, die, and sit through that 30-second unskippable movie again?



Jackknife

The evil mastermind behind the sister-framing shenanigans (erm, spoiler?). Faith gets her revenge when this shady dude falls to his death from a helicopter in the final moments of the game.

Faith trivia



Mirror's Edge's writer is Rhianna Pratchett, whose surname will be familiar to anyone who's ever screamed "Widdershins!" at a Discworld convention. Her other work includes Overlord, Overlord II and PC RPG game Divine Divinity.



A section of 'lift-based propaganda' mentions Sedanistan - a country in another of developer DICE's games, Battlefield Bad Company.



EA and DC combined forces to make a six-part comic book set in Faith's world. Imagine the game's stylised cut-scenes, Marvel style.



The reticule that seems slightly out of place in the minimal HUD was introduced to stop simulation sickness brought on by the action.



DICE added a new extension called Beast to the Unreal engine to deal with the city's super-reflective sheen. It's since built its own engine.



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